

She looks at me, for some time they
stare, then stray away when I catch
her glance. I ask,
"What is it?" She responds.
"Nothing." She says shyly.
"Honestly, what is it?"
"Your eyes"
"What?"
"Your eyes, you look so sad."
"I was told I have powerful eyes.
They show my anger, sorrow, worry,
sadness. They show truth and lie, pain
and love. They show a long life lived
for a young individual.
But my eye's don't talk."
"And they are so tense,
like everything hurts."

check out the rest of Mainey's POW on page 7



EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 1.43

Another week another fabulous edition of The Beat Within! Lets cut to the chase and hand over the reigns to our old friend and colleague, Allan Martinez. Allan!

Hey, what's up Beat writers/readers? How's life in there? How are plans? How's incarceration helping you to change your old ways of living life? I know some of you know me, and for those who don't know me, my name is Allan Martinez. I've been working for The Beat since the last time I got out from juvenile, YGC (Youth Guidance Center), in San Francisco. Today, I conduct workshops in Marin County juvenile hall, and where you are right at this moment reading this, Santa Clara Juvenile Hall.

First of all, I would like to thank you for permitting our Beat group and myself to be part of your life throughout your expression. For me, it is a pleasure to see you, to listen to what you have to say, and to give you my support through my advice, feedback, and suggestions. Working with you guys has been like guidance to me never again to end up in places that can affect my job, school, family, and my goals. Every time I see you guys in the position you're, it reminds me of the first time and last time I got locked.

Last week, when I was in B3, I spoke with a guy who is in the situation I was in years ago. It was his first time being in hall. I asked him how he felt, and he answered, "I feel scared, sad, and hopeless." That put me in a situation of wanting to help him out. So in order to make him feel better, I decided to share with him some of my stories. Sharing it with him inspired me to share it with you guys as well.

The first time I got locked up was in San Francisco. Actually, I would have gotten locked up a time before that one, but "The Narc" gave me another chance. I call him "The Narc" because his name is not registered in my brain. To be honest, I don't want to know his name. Though, I can say that I owe this man a lot, but that doesn't mean I want to shake his hand.

The first time I confronted this man was at the same spot I got locked up the first time. I was 15. I had two-eighths of weed on me. They took me to my dad's work. They told him what I had on me, and left me there with a warning that the next time I get caught, I wasn't coming to his shop but to a worse place. The same freaking day and hour, I went back to the same spot again. I didn't care. I thought it was a game. Three hours later, the same narc drove by, and caught me with 20 bucks worth of weed. Luckily, they didn't catch me with the crack I had in my mouth, which I had swallowed.

That was the first time I met Portola and Woodside Ave, (San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center). That was my first time being in juvenile hall. In there, I felt alone. I cried and I felt frustrated. When I had to call my mother to inform her where I was, I couldn't talk at all. I was out of breath and my words were not clear. I remember she answered the phone, asked who was calling — and I couldn't answer. She didn't find out I was locked up by me, but from one of the counselors.

I got out after a week. From the first time, I continued to get locked up very often because of my probation status. The same guy would search me every time he would see me on the streets. The most embarrassing moment of my life was in front of Lupe's house. (Lupe was the girl who I liked for many years, but never got a chance, because of the person I was and the things I was doing.) I was kicking it with some of my friends there. We were drinking, smoking and slanging drugs. All of a sudden, the "The Narc" came through. At that time, Lupe was looking out the window and we were at the corner. When I saw a police car coming our way, I just wished not to see this guy, "The Narc," because I knew what was coming.

I guess I wasn't as lucky as I wished. He was the first one who got out of the car and came towards me. He told me to face the walls, and pull down my pants in front of everybody, including my lovely Lupe. He found a nickel of weed on me. He grabbed my neck and hit me in my stomach with the flashlight really hard. I dropped on the ground feeling that cold and painful steel feeling that a hit with a flashlight left in my belly. He said, "You forced me to do this! Go home!" At that time, I wish I were as big as he was, stronger, and had the power to send him to jail, but I knew I wasn't going to get anywhere. It was going to be my words against his. When he saw me suffering, they (the cops) all left right away.

From there, every time he would see me, he would search me and insult me. I had no respect from any of those punks (cops), especially that white, fat looking guy, "The Narc."

One unexpected day, I was so drunk and high over several types of drugs, including weed. That's the day I consider to be the "last time." My boys and myself were kicking it, doing the things we liked to do, when two police cars came, including a narc car. Bang! It was that same freaking guy! He caught me with cocaine, weed and a knife. It was all over. I was so lost. When he took me in the booking room at juvenile hall, he was next to me, filling out his report. Before he left, he told me the words I will never forget in my whole damn life. Those words were, "Someday, if you grow up to be a man, you will thank me for bringing you here this time. You need to change, and it has to be now. Take a look at yourself. You look like garbage. You can be different." At that time, I just wanted to

kill this mother of hell.

The last time I was there was for eight months, until my lawyer came to me and offered me my options. They were, to do a drug program for nine months, go to The Ranch or a group home for a year. So I decided to do the drug program Y-TEC (Youth Treatment And Education Court). This program and its functions helped me realize that life isn't just kicking it on the corner, destroying others' lives by selling them dangerous drugs, banging and hurting others for a color or a street that doesn't belong to me — and the most important thing, that I can live a life free of drugs. In this program, I learned to have real fun without being under the influence of any drugs or alcohol.

To make my story shorter, after I completed the program, someone from The Beat introduced me to The Beat Within organization/office. Since then, I've been out of trouble for about eight years. I'm still going to school, got married, obtained material things I wanted, plus I even bought an apartment in Panama City, Panama. I got out of the gang I was in. I stopped hanging around people who can get me in trouble, and I am living a beautiful life without drugs in my system.

I gained the most important thing, THE RESPECT I lost while being there. A few months ago, I saw the same "Narc," after years. He looked at me and laughed. I laughed too with pride. I thought to myself, this guy doesn't have the right to touch me, search me or anything else, because I'm free. I'm not talking about being in the aspect of walking on the streets or that I'm not in the system any more. When I said I am free, I mean to say that I'm free from my past, the gangs, memories, the system, and all the bad influences that once surrounded me.

Today, I consider myself being very respectful. Watching my back while walking around the streets, hiding myself from the police, having to carry a rag, a weapon, or having to sell drugs to use drugs is not my life anymore. In a way, I thank that man; on the other hand, I hate him. I forgive him for what he did to me, but I can't forgive him for what he is, a man who doesn't respect others. I hope life teaches him a lesson not to hit minors and to respect others. I have become a respectful man; I hope he can do the same.

My advice to you all is, don't wait for something bad to happen to you in order to make a change. Changing is hard, but it is possible. If I changed, you can change. Remember that, always.

Excellent story Allan, thank you.

All right, this week's topics addressed in this issue were, "When I Was Little, I Used To Think..."

OUR second topic, "I Wish I Could Tell You..."

Last but not least, "Scary Halloween Stories" — Tell us a Halloween story. It can be a true story about something that happened on Halloween. It can describe the best costume you ever made for yourself. It can be a scary Halloween-type story (that may have happened on a different day). Or, you could tell us a story of "Trick or Treat" with unusual tricks or wonderful treats. And if you have nothing to draw from your own experience and memory, then make up a spooky Halloween story — one that will make our blood run cold when we read it, full of ghosts and monsters and spooks of all sorts! It's your Halloween topic, so do with it what you will.

OK, this week's steller contributions aka POW (Pieces Of the Week) writers are Ray Ray, Young Hitta, Cash Money, Michael, and B Littles from SF/YGC. From the 150 Crew we have Nicole, Big Vic, two from Mainy, Lil' Jt, Clem, Scared Shhhless, and James. And last but not least we want to congratulate Daniel from Santa Cruz.

With this said, do not forget our latest (the 16th) editorial note writing contest. The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House, too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush. (Don't write anything that will get you in trouble with the Office of Homeland Security...)

The contest submission deadline was Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006, but as usual given our poor mailing system we decided to extend the contest until December 21, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all have been featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth-place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

See you all next week readers, it's our pleasure to give you this opportunity. This issue is dedicated to you writers who are going to programs. We wish you the best in getting through your program, be it the ranch, a group home, drug rehab, CYA, a CYA Alternative. Stay focused and determined to succeed. If problems arise, don't run or resort to violence! Address the issue with the powers that be. Use your words! Try it!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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EDITOR'S NOTE	2
B3 BUTTERFLIES	4
PIECES OF THE WEEK	6
CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK	10
STANDOUTS	14
SAN MATEO COUNTY	27
VOICES IN SPANISH	29
WEEKLY WRITINGS	29
THE BEAT WITHOUT	40



From The Beat: We are so honored to welcome the SF/YGC B3 Butterflies! Thanks for SF/YGC's Woodside School English teacher Megan Mercurio we have the following submissions. We so look forward to working with Megan and her class of fabulous writers in the coming weeks! What follows is their first body of work. We'll let the Butterflies take it from here...

From The SF/YGC B3 Butterflies: Each and every day we meet as an English class for nearly two hours, and try to make sense of our lives and the world around us. We do this by getting to know the characters on the pages of the literature we read, and by examining our own lives so that we can leave the institution transformed and empowered young women. Our writing arises from our souls, and from the myriad experiences we have endured in our short time on earth. Judge us not, simply take in our words with an open heart and learn from the emotions and stories of our lives. Special Thanks: Dana Warden

I Hear Poverty Singing

An Adaptation of Walt Whitman's I Hear America Singing

I hear poverty singing, the carried carols I hear,
Those of young Latino gangsters, each one singing his as it
should be blithe and strong,

The knocked up teenage girl singing hers as she thinks of
ways to tell her father,

The transvestite prostitute singing his as he makes ready for
work, or leaves off work

The dope fiend singing what belongs to her, the monkey
singing on her back,

The incarcerated 16 year old boy singing his as he makes
a collect call to his mom, The mother singing hers as she
answers the phone,

The lonely mother of two's song, the cheating baby daddy's
on his way in the morning, or at noon,

The delicious singing of the homeless, or of the poor who
haven't given up at work, or of the mommas getting welfare,

Each singing what belongs to him or her and to none else,

The day what belongs to the day—at night poverty singing
with open mouth their strong melodious songs.

-Maya

it'll only be worse if you told me don't
think that way. Then I'd be blind; blind
and dumb to the fact of reality.

Freedom Behind Bars

I have a dream that once day, our tax dollars will not be spent on creating "better" prisons, but will be spend bettering the minds of our youth. One day, every child in an educational facility will be fed for free, just as those in prison are. And someday, no youth will be left alone in a prison cell without having another inmate there to comfort her or him. And nobody will tell the youths, "no, you may not go to the bathroom" or "no, there are no seconds." Someday, handcuffs will be made of ribbon, and there will be CLEAN underwear for everyone in the juvenile system. NO CHILD will be taken from their home to live at a group home unless it is what they want. They will be able to call friends and family for emotional support every night of the week. They will have the opportunity to watch the local news daily on a personal TV in their room to catch up on current events. You may say that "criminals" do not deserve such lenient punishment, but nobody deserves to be stripped of their God-given freedom. It is not until this dream of mine becomes a reality when justice will truly be served to all.

-Mel

My World

This place which I sleep, eat and breathe in. Reality is making things go bad; it's emotions, but now I want revenge. Revenge on who put my life in this position; but I can't, I love them. I feel and have no control on the outside of this world I'm in. Deep down inside, even if I wasn't in here, it would make no difference. But it still hurts because in the place I can't even say I've tried. I'm thinking negative things in my head and soon they will flow to my heart. I don't have time for this place they call my lesson. Could cry, could keep dreaming but I know how it goes; it'll only be worse if you told me don't think that way. Then I'd be blind; blind and dumb to the fact of reality. I'm no fool, I know this situation won't change. I've said once before, no, many times before, it's not my fault the way things are. They brainwash, play games, lie right to...well in here, right to my ears. Might as well say they don't even see my face. They don't care, but I tried to tell them. They won't listen but they'll see. As long as I got me I'm gonna be ok. I don't need anything right, just like I have to make the decision to change no one else; so I can say if I'm going to fail, right? No one else is to have a say on what I do, it's only an opinion. I can only say it once; it's only an opinion.

-Kylce





Hopes and Dreams

Have you ever been locked up in a confined place and had to listen to people you don't even know? Have you ever broken a law several times until you got caught up? Have you ever been pressured to something you didn't want to do? I believe there shouldn't be Juvenile Hall, just places where we get counseled and taught differently. Or maybe, there shouldn't be police officers because there are still crimes being committed; like murder, rape and kidnapping. "Can't you see?" The world is full of crime and people are dying just because of the simple fact that someone who can't control their drinking decides to go speeding inside a car in a residential area. Does the world make sense? We have to go to war just because the president isn't satisfied with himself, and his eight years of ruling are almost up. I have a dream! I have a dream that the unwanted will be given love. I have a dream that crime will stop and peace will finally come. I have a dream that juveniles will be given another chance at life and all prison inmates will be given special therapy and also chances for freedom.

-White Chocolate



Little Girls

Have you ever felt like you had to give someone a very special part of your body in order to have something you really want and think is very special to you? Have you ever felt like you were being pressured into doing something you didn't want to do? Have you ever thought you were being mentally and emotionally disturbed by somebody you really though had feelings for you? Have you ever felt like somebody was just telling you things to get you to do something you did not know anything about? Have you ever felt like what you were doing wasn't good, but you did it anyway because you thought that person really had full played feelings for you?

Today in the world, little girls feel like they are pressured into doing things. Little girls are being influenced and they're being manipulated. When doing wrong, they're being told it's right. Little girls are thinking they have to give up something that's a very special part of their body; in order for that person to keep them. Little girls are being exploited to the world and most of them don't even know it.

I have a dream; that today in the world, little girls will come together and build a strong, peaceful mind. They will be able to put a stop to what they don't want to do. These girls will be able to know what other people are trying to do with them. They will know and believe in themselves and have confidence in themselves. They would know that by giving a person what they want, that person doesn't really want you. They will know when they're being emotionally and mentally disturbed by older people. They will start to love themselves and tell themselves that this is not how they should be treated. They will stand and tell themselves that I do not have to do this. They will tell themselves that I am strong minded.

-Lil' Miss Y

I have a dream; that today in the world, little girls will come together and build a strong, peaceful mind. They will be able to put a stop to what they don't want to do.

Tenderloin

The place where youngstas from all over the bay come to sell their dope. Where pimps hide out, preying on young women who have been abused and have lost all hope. Without a doubt, this is the land of the real living dead.

More frightening than any horror movie or scary book you have ever read. The smell of poverty and homelessness will take you by surprise. It will fill your life with confusion, all love and joy deprived.

In the TL, creme, shwacka and hop are a man's best friend. Nearly took both my parents lives and brought it to an end. Even I stayed in those junky hotels that reek of filth and death, when I was in my addiction, hooked on crystal meth.

Thank God for my escape, for I was wrapped up in the lies. The lies of the L's, stay away as I advise.

-Maya

Money And Motivation

I see dolla signs,
But do these signs see me?
I mean, I'll do almost anything fo' tha dough.
But what would that dough do to me?
It's crazy how I can't do without it..
but it could do without me.
What I'm chasin' is replacing tha faces I love.
Big Frank, George and Jackson
Got me makin' suicidal actions.
Poisonin' my people...
Damn! This game is lethal.
I see dolla signs,
But do these signs see me?
My momma tell stay out of harms way...
But harm seems to follow good.
And I know a ninja would try to shatter my dreams,
but if I die, tell my moms that my life ain't really what
it seems.
Shhh...just pray fo' me in this life I lead,
But I hope you pray fo me in this life I leave.
You see me now?

-D Greedy Grinda B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What an excellent poem about the lure of money, and the reaffirmation of the old saying, "All that glitters isn't gold." We are praying for you to leave the money chase if you have to break the law to chase it, because like you said, money can live without you, no problem. The old story of the tortoise and the hare comes to mind. There's nothing wrong with wanting to reach that finish line, but slow and steady wins the race...

What I'm Trying To Say Is

i wish i could tell you how much i loved you
i wish i could tell you how much i cared
i wish i could tell you how much i needed you
when my mind wasn't clear
i wish i could tell you how much it hurts me
when you beat me and cut my hair
i wish i could tell you how much it hurts me
to see you like this — all strung out and up at night
what happened, why did it all change
one minute your smiling, the next you're all up in a
rage
i miss that person i fell in love with
the one who was always happy and cared
i wish i could tell you let's just leave
and go far far away
i wish i could tell you today
but now i'm clean and sober
and you're still the same
that cold-hearted person i've yet to blame
i wish i could tell you how much needed you
but that would not be true
so baby what i'm trying to say is
i wish i could tell you i'm through

-Nicole, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're clean and sober now which is not the end but the beginning of learning how to live comfortably in your own skin, facing feelings buried deep within and the truth of who you are, what you've done and where you've been. They say you're not responsible for your addiction, but you're responsible for your recovery. You're launched on an inner journey of self-discovery, leading beyond shame, blame and the self-hating game of drug addiction to the sanity of your spirit's recovery from diseased thinking. It's less important for you to accuse your former lover than it is for you to uncover the part you played in a sick cycle of rage and pain that cannot be excused by the name of love — it's less important that you tell your abuser you're through than that you prove these brave and wise words to be true. If you write the truth and follow through, that's enough. Protect yourself, remain abstinent from alcohol and drugs. Don't tempt yourself, keep your distance from bad love. It was all one piece, the self-destructive pattern of the same disease — there is no cure but it's something you can treat: Stay clean and sober every day and avoid all self-deceit. Don't look for drama. Don't nurse your pain. Let it in the house of truth, then let it out again.

How Life Was In Samoa

Samoa is hella different from San Francisco. First, there ain't no tall buildings, there ain't no freeways. There aren't no projects and everybody or mostly everybody own they houses. The mountains ain't brown and ugly, they got waterfalls and the mountains are green and hella tall.

The way that the people act is different from how they act here. They more "kid like" and like to play, no matter what age they is. But the kids over here is more mature.

The ocean surrounds the island and it's clean, not dirty like here. They got coral reefs and stuff. Only some islands of Samoa got volcanoes. They got hella hella cars, like almost every family got two cars and they big cars like trucks and SUVs because the roads is all messed up. They ain't smooth and straight.

Everybody lives in villages, and they mostly all mostly all know each other. The schools is not in one building, they are separate buildings. They look like South City High, how the school got separate buildings for different classes. The only fast food restaurants they got is McDonalds, Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Checkers. That's it.

There's about 15 different islands in American Samoa, and eight big islands in W. Samoa.

-Ray Ray B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love your description of Samoa, Ray Ray. It makes us want to visit such a beautiful place. But it also makes us want to know why you ever left a place that sounds like Paradise. Do you want to go back? Would you ever consider living there? Anyway, thank you for spitting some real knowledge in our direction.

i want to express myself but i just don't know how
it feels like they milking me
for my produce like i was cow

How I Feel

i wish i could tell you how i really feel
but it's just so hard to keep it real
i'm trying to hold up strong like some steel
but in here it's hard enough to eat a meal
i want to express myself but i just don't know how
it feels like they milking me for my produce like i was cow
letting you know how it is for me
there ain't no other, i'm the only big v-i-c
i try but words won't come out
i got no vocal chords, i cannot shout
so I write
trying to do right
but as hard as i try
with all my might
i still can never see the light
they say silence is power
so instead of talkin', i'm quiet atop the tower
let my words speak for themselves
putting my poetry at the top of the shelves
when i open up, i get stuck
at least i got my writing, which is on lock
'cause i got a gift and i will use it
not like a drug, i won't abuse it
so i let my writing be my expression
be the escape from my depression

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For sure there are good habits and bad. Drug addiction contributed to putting you in this sad position, but putting in written form your feelings and thoughts, aspirations and pain, is like holding down a job with legal pay — it's what you need to protect your freedom 'cause no one can steal your heartfelt thoughts when they read 'em even if they try and repeat 'em. 'Cause even locked up you're a role model, rising above incarceration with your powerful poems going full throttle!

The Halloween I missed

I am going to write about this Halloween I'm going to be locked up in juvenile hall. I have never been locked up for a real holiday before so this is kind of hard for me, especially since it's my daughter's first one.

See, my baby daddy has not been around for my whole pregnancy because he's been locked up. He is a thug, pimp, and drug dealer all in one.

I was only fifteen when I met him and when I found out I was pregnant. It wasn't long before he went to jail. He was supposed to get out in a month but it's been ten months already.

I always told my baby that I was going to change just for her. I always said that my baby would never need anyone but me. Now she's only three months and I already been locked up twice! And I'm not only going to miss this Halloween but I'm going to miss her first Thanksgiving and probably her first Christmas. I never thought that it was going to get this out of control.

Now I'm 16, raising a baby on my own.

My mom is like my baby's father because she does whatever for her. She's taking care of her now.

Being a mom is a lot harder then anything ever in life.

So to all the young women who think that they are ready for kids, "Make sure that your done screwin' up first, 'cause you don't want to miss out on anything."

-Peaches, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have a little tiny baby relying on you and you have gotten yourself locked up twice! If you're not careful, the state will take her away from you and once she's in the system, there is no telling what will happen to her. You need to get your act together and straighten up so you can provide a decent life for that innocent girl that you brought into this world. And if you're waiting for her daddy to get out of jail, straighten up himself and start taking responsibility, we don't think you should hold your breath. It's a tough time, but you'll get through it. Just do the right thing! This is no joke!

Eyes

She looks at me, for some time they stare, then stray away when I catch her glance. I ask,

"What is it?" She responds.

"Nothing." She says shyly.

"Honestly, what is it?"

"Your eyes"

"What?"

"Your eyes, you look so sad."

"I was told I have powerful eyes. They show my anger, sorrow, worry, sadness. They show truth and lie, pain and love. They show a long life lived for a young individual. But my eye's don't talk."

"And they are so tense, like everything hurts."

"It does, very so."

"Why do your eyes do that?"

"Because I have a hard time communicating my feelings like so many others. This is the way I explain myself honestly if not spoken is shown through these eyes. Deep oak brown eyes. My serious loving caring hating hunting why kinda eyes."

"Because maybe they like something they see," I say.

"I'm serious" she whines

"It's me, I don't know, but if people knew about... it would be a problem."

"Why"

"because" my feelings are true through my eyes!

-Mainey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a creative, philosophical piece about how we communicate our deepest feelings and truest selves to each other. We can't wait to read what you write next week!

Trapped In Modern Day Slavery Part 2

Look outside and tell me

What do you see?

Dope dealers, crackheads

Who look just like you and me

It's like we're institutionalized

And never realized

The precious time that we're wasting

You don't get to know your family had a kid

They growing up without a daddy.

Women are starting to fall victim to the same crimes as men

And they say we're not living in modern day slavery

Why the hell do we do the things we do

Knowing the outcome?

'Cause green is for the money

And gold is for the honeys

We're materialistic people

And that makes us dummies

They put it on our heads

What we need, need, need

While all we need to do

Is take care of the families in the community

So we young loved ones

Can live in peace and harmony

Because I be damned if you say

We living in equality

They corrupted black people's minds

To believe this and that

We gave them our souls

For a piece of crack

They made us a promise

That we can get rich

By selling that shhh

We just digged a deeper hole

We got backed into a corner

In a no-win situation

Confused, feeling trapped

Want to get out

But don't know how

The homies gonna react

-Cash Money LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Amazing, brilliant poem. What inspired this well crafted piece of work? Yes, the crack-selling scene can be considered a set-up to keep the seller in slavery, but now that you know what's plaguing your community what is your plan to avoid this trap all together? We bet you know the ticket out too regardless how the homies react! How do you think they would honestly react if you left your old lifestyle behind you??

The Beat Within

I can't wait until I get out of jail. When I get out I'm goin' straight home and go to sleep, and when I wake up, I'm gonna eat a "Fat" home-cooked meal. Then I'ma thank God that I'm out. I would also meet up with my girl and get something cracking till I faint and can't do nothing no more.

Then a couple days later I'ma go get my GED at John Adams. Then when I'm done with that, I'm gonna apply to City College and try my hardest to finish my "AA" degree. Then I'm gonna try to get a job at YGC so I could teach kids that the thing I used to do ain't cool, and there's still time to change your life.

So what I'm tryna say, Beat, is pretty simple: change yo' life kids and don't mess up yo' shhh and end up in YA.

-Young Hitta B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have created what we always ask young people about — a plan for your own success on the outs! That is a tremendous accomplishment, and we're behind you all the way. If we have any advice at all, it's to be ready for all the bumps in the road that all of life's plans encounter from time to time. In other words, don't get discouraged if everything doesn't go as you plan. Just keep working to make your plan a reality, and soon you'll be looking back on the decisions you made in childhood and smile at how far you've moved.

when i cry

i wish i was dead
 i wanna feel blood drain from my veins
 i wanna feel the bullet go in my head
 i'm down on luck and most of the time i just don't give a damn
 'cause either way i'm gonna be stuck in the muck
 i'm like a empty cup
 dead in the water like a duck
 why i gotta feel empty inside
 when people say they love me
 why do it gotta be a lie
 words like razors slash at my wrist
 got me breaking down
 like life is leaving, i can't hear a sound
 got me losing my focus and it's getting hard to see
 my whole empty life flashing in front of me
 always been abandoned
 but now i feel forgotten,
 so every time they lock me in
 it's my death i be plottin'
 please take my hands
 i feel myself fading away,
 'til i'm six feet in the ground
 now there's dirt all in my way
 and i'm choking
 i can't breathe
 buried in my grave alive
 entombed by stress, grief and strife
 lonely, oh so lonely
 try to find my place
 but to them i'm not noteworthy
 just another naked face
 how much i wanna die
 drowned in a pool of tears here in my cell
 live or die whichever way
 i'm still bound to go to hell
 i'm like a little turtle
 afraid to come out my shell
 i need the drugs, i'm under their spell
 i just hit the bottom of a deep and empty well
 it's like i ought to die
 i ought to be deceased
 close my eyes and rest in peace
 to all this pain i just wanna die
 i don't wanna live with these feelings inside

maybe dead i can rest in peace
 no more pain, life's my disease
 i don't wanna live empty inside
 they're taking it all so i don't want to live
 i just have nothing left to give
 that little-boy smile,
 Has long since gone
 and nothing goes right
 while everything goes wrong
 it's getting too hard to breathe,
 i don't know what's going on
 and i don't really care,
 i'm tired of trying to be strong
 life's blood leaking down my wrist
 small puddles of blood where tears were on the floor
 my dreams have all been shredded and torn
 look and you can see into my core
 hell i just don't wanna be alone anymore
 i look around and see four walls and a door with no knob
 i need reassurance, i need some love,
 i need some help from the lord above
 but who can tell me if he will listen
 what value am i to him,
 'cause everything i did turned out to be a sin
 no matter how hard i try
 so what is left for me but to die
 every night i still struggle not to cry
 right now i feel like peeling my flesh
 tearing it apart
 because i always feel
 like i'm dead at heart.

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the darkest night of the soul, it feels like only death could make you again whole. Hope is a forgotten dream, and the emptiness of sightless dark conceals whatever light might once have revealed; the heart aches with every beat and multiplies the pain that reaches from head to feet; till all that's left is the desire to go numb, no longer speak of what's to come but go completely, silently dumb — no ears to hear, no tongue will speak, no eyes to see, no heart to set free. How can a soul survive with no light to see? By touch, we crawl and learn to feel the shape of truth, intimate, inarticulate but real; more like sex when fingertips explored the dark in ecstasy, they now explore the emptiness where love used to be. No lovers body but God's face unseen at last is felt, and the frozen numb terror of the heart begins to melt. At the innermost core of darkness, faith is rediscovered with a sharpness beyond ego's reach, for with no proof at all, the ego withers and the soul grown small as a mustard seed, begins to breathe with no eye to the future but presently feels the heat of a black sun rising from the heart's core to fill body, mind and space with faith's radiant power — for it is God's face hidden from view that smiles like the little boy you once knew to be yourself, and from the deepest poverty of spirit, you cease to fear it, the endless inner wealth of inexplicable spiritual health. For the innocent boy is born again from the darkest womb of all his previous sin washed clean, in the night of the soul, unseen, JT is again made whole and free again.

Night Mare

One Halloween about two years ago, I was out with my friends gettin' candy and scarin' people — and then, all of a sudden, everything turned black!

When I was able to see again, all my friends were gone. As I started walking home, I started to see shadows floating around in the middle of the street. As I started to slip into the shadows to hide, the floatin' shadows started to come after me!

So as I'm running, more figures appear in front of me. These were unhooded, and they were skeletons! But they weren't the usual type of skeleton: it was green and slimy. Then as I'm running, I twist my ankle — and they get me!

They're eating me alive! I'm screaming and kicking! And then it all goes black, and I'm in the hospital. The skeletons are my doctors, and they eat me again! And then, I wake up. I'm in my room.

-Scared Shhhless, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great scary story of a nightmare within a nightmare, starting out with "trick or treating" on Halloween night. Every detail is perfectly designed to frighten and repulse (like green and slimy skeletons). But the hospital/doctor scene is the crowning scream! We'll all be happy to awaken safe, even in this knob-less rooms.

My Wish

I wish I could tell you that humans can fly
 I wish I could tell you that I can fly higher than the Rocky Mountains.
 I wish I could tell you that I jumped off the Bay bridge and flew across the ocean
 I wish I could tell you that I'm stronger and can fly higher than Superman.
 I wish I could tell you that I have no weakness.
 I wish I could tell you that I rose from the dead.
 I wish I could tell you that I led 300 people to the Promised Land
 I wish I could tell you that God is one of us.

-Clem, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In this poem, you start with one magic idea, and then with each new line you build it up a little, make the idea a little bigger and more powerful, until by the end you've written about the greatest mystery of all — the question of whether we will have help from something bigger than all of us to help us get through life. It's a beautiful and moving poem about faith and doubt... you have a great talent, and we are honored to print this in The Beat.

Turning Into Dad, Keeps Me Up At Night

Something that keeps me up at night, is knowing that I'm turning into someone that I told myself I would never be like. That person was my dad.

I told myself I would never grow up and be in-and-out of jail throughout my youth like him, but look where I am — in a cage at a young age! I am doing the same things he was doing. Everyone tried to warn me and protect me from this kind of future, but me being the hard-headed person I am, I thought there was no way I could mess up the way he did — but I am!

I told myself that if I ever had kids, I would never treat them the way my dad treated me. I thought this would be an easy one, too, but I catch myself treating my little brother the same way my dad treated me. And when I was doing this, I never even took time to think how I'm making him feel the same way I did — and no one deserves that!

That's what keeps me up at night.

-James, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't say we're sorry it's keeping you up at night, because it sounds like you're doing some important thinking. It is amazing how we can slide into doing to others, even (or especially?) our loved ones, the very same things that hurt us so much as children! It's like a stupid part of the brain thinks there are only two choices: victim or victimizer. As for what keeps bringing you to lock up, yeah, you are messing up. It's time to assess the situation, face the truth, and make some fundamental changes while you're still young — for your brother's sake, your future children's sakes, and your own sake.

Thought Going To Jail Meant Being A Man

When I was little, I used to think that life was easy. When I was little, I used to think that I'll never go to jail, but I always wanted to, because I was reading this Tupac book and he said when he was little, he thought that he wouldn't be a man until he got locked up.

Well, since he felt that way, I felt that way, too. I been locked up seven times, but guess what? I'm still not a man. Well, I started growing older and all that changed. I started growing up and I started doing stupid things. I got involved with my 'hood and thought I was untouchable. I thought that I'll be able to get away with anything, but guess what? I was wrong.

My 'hood, my so-called friends, and my stupid acts made me lose my mom. I know she not go' be mad at me forever, but she is now, and this is one of the times I really need her. So, basically, what I'm trying to say is, "Think before you act and think about how your mom will feel before you go out and do something stupid."

-Michael B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well said, Michael. Part of growing up is learning to think for yourself and rely on yourself. When we're young, we don't know who we are, how we affect the world, what we can get away with, how what we do will influence other's lives, or how the world is going to respond to us. It sounds like you're learning what Tupac could never accept—that some things you just can't get away with. In other words, it sounds like you are on the verge of completing that journey that not enough of us complete, the one that starts in irresponsible childhood and ends in responsible adulthood!

I Used To Think I Was Ugly

When I was little, I used to think I was ugly, but that's because I seen the other boys wit' these cute girls likin' them. And I was still watching Cartoon Network and playin' video games, playin' wit' the younger kids outside. Never thought about tryna make myself into one of the beautiful people wit' the cute girls. If the girls called me weird or ugly, it didn't matter to me after a while, yo.

And if I could go back, I wouldn't do one thing differently, 'cause I always been one of the beautiful people. Everyone was beautiful. No one else thought so, that's all. But I don't hear that shhh no more. I'm ugly? O...I thought so! Now, I ain't conceited. I wouldn't give a damn if someone thought I was weird or ugly now, anyway. My mama and my lil' mama think I'm handsome!

Look at who you really are. If you know that you're beautiful inside, then everyone will notice, because only you know what's inside.

We're all beautiful, whether your crush think you cute or not...somebody notices your beauty! Remember that. The kid put you on wit' a lil' game! Word!

-B Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Excellent commentary! Your words will empower many readers. You make us feel good too. You have become one of the bright stars of The Beat community. By the way, what or who helped you discover your beauty?

The traffic was filling the streets.
It was starting to give me a headache.
My face was beginning to burn from the sun.
It felt like I was in a small cage, for hours

When I Was Little, I Used To Think . . .

When I was little I used to think it was cool to get in trouble.

I used to think I was so cool, running from the cops, cutting class and getting arrested.

But now that I'm here, locked up for a big charge, not knowing what's gonna happen to me, how long I'm gonna be here, and where I go from here, I realize that being in trouble ain't cool.

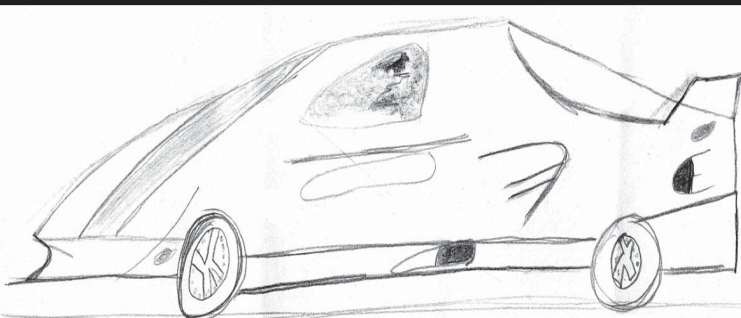
Now that I'm facing what I'm facing, I realize that I was dumb and wasn't thinking about what I was doing.

The ones I was hurting most were my family. They need me and I'm not there to help them. So all I'm saying is that everything you think is cool but gets you in trouble isn't cool.

You gotta think about who you're affecting most. Your family does hurt when you're not there.

-Daniel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We're sorry you've had to learn this important lesson the hard way. We don't want you to give up on yourself. Make it a goal to do at least twice as much good in the world as the bad you've already done. You can't undo the past but you can make the future better. And you do that by being a great guy from this minute on. Even when you fall down, get up and start over. And try to do that for the rest of your life.



Communess

I'm disgusted!

See, we've sacrificed many minds to discover what is wrong with today's world, but nobody seems to give it ten seconds of a thought process. With all the frequent killings, quarrels, and unexpected irregular sickness or outbreak of disease. As well as the direct effect on my co-citizens of poverty. And still I see higher class minorities continuing their routine jobs with impeccable persistence, restricted to a narrow mind of "we don't care" or "so what!"

They conceal their grief, their regret, their worry that our misfortune is not to have what they are given. And that we're not like them – that's if they have a conscience, but if not, lead an astounding life in hatred for a man of lower stature.

If you would, pity me your cowardly spoken or unspoken insults; you mock me, say we can be whatever we want, but by your expectations, your way, and no way else. I need to pay to get the complete knowledge, for it is not free, even though you say it is. You are afraid, you realize that your money outnumbers us, with that you seek refuge, protection from law, rules which require us, the majority, to be restrained if we protest. We have to endure all sorts of consequences under the circumstances of evil involvement, which seems to eclipse my kind steadily, and mysteriously effect a large magnitude that varies in some societies.

Why do we both yearn to begin petty escapades, ruining lives more on my side that you so in turn you KEEP rule of my people. In prison you rule, in education, health services,

politics, which prevents us from mounting to anything special. I still make you tremble, how I intimidate you with my pride. I am not under you. We are equal, parallel.

So why think my internal strength is stronger than yours? Why believe you are greater than me? Why not see eye to eye?

I understand some are out of control, consumed by the same hatred one of yours might possess. It is a contagious but curable trademark of our cultures, our primary mind too determined to find out who is best, who is alpha male. But who am I, who are you, who are we to decide? This isn't a democracy, nor is it a monarchy. I'm uninspired to the aggressive ways to make people support an imagination hat there's peace in the world! That's a hoot, for what I've mentioned and countless other reasons. This world is not at peace, nor is it safe! I'll bear no children on this earth for such. Peace! Keep right on dreaming.

Why look down on me?

I don't look down on you.

I don't look up to you, either.

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There are many amazing things about this passionate manifesto, but we'll stick with just one: It is both a call to arms, a cry of outrage against the very real injustice and inequality in our world, and a plea for peace and reconciliation. You are right, we live in a country that doesn't yet deserve its name of democracy. We have a country that is not "by the people, for the people". Instead it is by some of the people, and for some of the people, while many other deserving souls get trampled under its wheels. And here you are, not only demanding justice but demanding that BOTH sides learn to see each other. You have greatness inside you – the chance to be a leader, a speaker, a mover of souls. But first, of course, you have to meet and face the struggles ahead without becoming a prisoner of anger and resentment. How will you do this?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

When I was Little

When I was little, I used to think about being a grown man, because they used to looked like could they do anything without asking nobody. Now that I am almost grown, that life style is messing with me a lot, but I know I'm still going to make it.

If I just keep talking to my God, it's going to be all good. And when I was little I used to play for football teams. It used to be like that's all I would live for, but once I started getting out there, everything just started to get messed up in my life. I wish I could tell y'all now how I really feel. But what I can tell y'all right now is how I wish I was that little boy again.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If only there had been some subject in school that you learned to love even half as much as football, but it's hard when all there is to love is sports and the street. Part of it may be the fault of the classroom, but part is the lack of respect a youngster gets from his peers for doing schoolwork well — and with no family member to push you toward books, the street was just waiting to put in its hooks. 'Cause you see the big boys doing whatever they want in the street, but you don't see the incarcerated life to which it leads. Maybe some youngster reading The Beat will see more clearly and make some necessary changes early, after reading your piece. 'Cause little boys need someone who cares enough to teach the truth, like you.

Leaving My Family

When I was little, I used to think that I would always stay with my family and never leave their side.

But at the age of 11, Child Protective Services came into my grandfather's house and took me and my sister away from my grandfather. They sent us to a group home, and to keep it short my sister ran a week after, and I stayed there until I was 15 and started to come to the Hall. Then they sent me to a group home, and then I pimped it and went to my sister's house, then started messing up and then came in here for this crazy shhhh.

Mo Love or No Love!

-Lil' Manman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Tell us more, Lil' Manman, the story of your life, from the bits and pieces you've given us so far, is amazing –so honest! Do you think that your life changed for the worse after CPS came into your life? Do you still talk to your grandfather? If CPS took you away from that house, it's because they thought the environment was not good for you or your sister? Do you think that's true? You have so much to teach us and our readers about life experience, when are you going to put that pencil to paper for real and get going?

I wish I could tell y'all now how I really feel. But what I can tell y'all right now is how I wish I was that little boy again.

RIP Lil' Arturo Romero

What's up with it, Beat? What's cracking? Well, I want to start off by giving my utmost respect to all my loved ones. Now, down to business: I want to pay tribute to my homie, Lil' Arturo Romero, RIP.

He was one of my close homies that I would be down with. This homie would always be down to do whatever it came down to. He didn't deserve to die! He should be alive till this day.

When Arturo died, the homies gathered up deep, to pay their respect to Lil' Turo. We were there, no matter what — rain, cold. Police or no police, we were still out there, deep, paying respect. The vigil was something not to be missed, but when I saw him in the casket, I didn't know what to say. As one of my homies said, "When thugs cry, don't ask them why — just know that something really bad is going down." My homie that told me this, is a rapper trying to come up. He wrote a song dedicated to Lil' Turo, and he called it, "When Thugs Cry". The funeral was nothing nice, lots of people crying and very sad.

After my homie passed away, everything went downhill for me. I made some bad decisions and ended up where I am now. I also want to pay tribute to my dad's family members and all the fallen soldiers. Well, Beat, I'm out. Till next time.

-Big Will, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For those who know you by the other name you've used in The Beat, we'll tell them you're AKA Sasquatch. We know you've been busy with work assignments at Camp during the hour we come up there, and we commend you for it. It sounds square, but just getting used to spending time working a job (even volunteer, like at Camp) is good practice for making that transition to survival on the outs — not just your life surviving but your freedom, too. We know how hard-headed you are about your gangsta point of view, and you know we're in your mother's rooting section when it comes to that. But we know, too, that you don't want to see more funerals like that if you can help it. And while you can't make decisions for others, we're convinced that others look to you as a role model, whether you know it or not (and whether you like it or not). You say Lil' Turo was down for whatever it came down to, and we understand why you respect that. But sometimes what it comes down to is leading your homies away from trouble, calming down a hothead, not rushing to judgment, helping a friend survive by tempering (you know, tempered steel has been heated longer in the fire so that it can bend without breaking) that crazy part of him that doesn't care if he dies. You know we're coming at you like this because we care, about you and your homies everywhere. RIP Lil' Arturo Romero.

Blessed

Well, it's been a while since I've seen the front of my house. But that don't mean I'm giving up. That means I'm giving in. Not to wait people say, but into the system. That mean I'm trying to do what I got to do, go to this rehab for two years and get my program over with.

Well, all from all, I'm blessed that I got both my parents here with me 100% of the way. I am also blessed that I woke up this morning with air to breathe. Last I'm thankful that I'm able to get a second chance to prove to everyone — but mostly to myself — that I can succeed and not fall back to that hole that I've been in too many times.

-Ace B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Congratulations, Ace! You've made the most important decision of your life so far by committing yourself to doing your rehab program and getting on with your life. It's that first step — acknowledging that you have a problem that you can control, and deciding to do something about it — that is the hardest. From here, it's just a question of putting one foot in front of the other, taking it one day at a time, and leaving this life behind you. It won't happen over night, and you may find yourself slipping or even falling. But you have begun a journey that will require you to get up if you stumble and keep going forward. It may be hard to see it from where you are, but the road you've committed yourself to is bright and fulfilling, and well worth the effort.

Hope For Better Days

In my room as I lay

The only thing I hope for is a better day

Life sometimes is hard to face

As the up and downs constantly come my way

But the only thing that keeps me goin' is the thought of a better day

So many struggles I'm forced to go through not knowin'

What my fate is going to be,

But best believe

That I will drop to my knees and pray to the skies above for Better days, so much grief throughout these streets but all I can hope is that someone triggers and this comes to a cease

too many bodies being laid under the earth please father

Lord give us some better days from the ins and the outs

the moment never ends

my lil' brother Rony now campin' out in Boys Control. I just

hope my bra will see better days.

To all locked down, don't trip

ain't nothin' gonna change on the outs

but what is gonna have to change

is yourself

and as that happens trust there will be better days

to my squad

this lil' set back ain't shhh

we gonna be out sooner or later and Marcellus we'll make

sure we see them better days.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a wonderful and hopeful poem from one of our favorite Beat writers. But we cut out a reference to your "squad" and we'll be doing that from now on. We don't want to disrespect the people you feel loyal to, but your message is one for the whole community, for anyone who has ever been put down, and check it out: Have you ever thought that maybe one of the reasons that the kids who run the streets are EASIER to keep down because they divide themselves up into squads/gangs/sets?

In Loving Memory Of Marcellus Cassius Haley . . .

On Feb.16, 2006, my brother Marcellus who was also my best friend, was gunned down in front of his aunt's home. I got a phone call about five minutes after that. When I showed up, he was laying stomach down on the steps of his aunt's apartment. I ran to him, trying to tell him to breathe while I was rubbing his back, his aunt, and my mom were also there with him screaming his name. I told him, hang in there 'till the ambulance come but the ambulance took too long.

The police finally showed up and he was still breathing. Trying as hard as he could to stay with us. The police officer walked up to him and turned around not doing anything. I stood there trying to talk to him through everything but he finally let go. His eyes rolled to the back of his head as he stopped breathing.

Marcellus was a loving friend, brother, boyfriend and father, he was 18 years old born on June 19, 1987. I think of you everyday, wishing you were here to see your niece, me and Moe Moe. I spend time everyday thinking of you. I would remember when you and everybody would come to my house and we would have so much fun. I remember the nights you would knock at in the early, early morning even though there was a note on the door that said do not knock after ten. I love you always, Vanessa

-Vanessa, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost your brother and your best friend Vanessa. It's difficult to imagine the pain you must feel and the empty place that must be there without him. The only thing we can suggest is that you take that pain and turn into positive work that will help others from feeling the same. You're going to grow up eventually and you can stay on the path you're on (coming to juvie) or you can do what your brother would have wanted: go to school, get an education, and fight against other young people being murdered by gun violence. Sounds big? It is. On a smaller tip, you can stay away from people that carry guns, keep your head down and convince your friends and family to do the same.

Mary Landerson

The year is 1980. I still remember the time that me and my girlfriend, Angela, had a terrible experience. It was horrible. Now I share this story with you all.

"Come on, Anthony, wake up!"

"One minute, Angela."

"Come on, we're going to be late. I don't want to miss the fair."

"Okay, Okay, I'm up. I'm up. Give me five minutes to get ready, get out of my room."

"Breakfast ready, Anthony."

"Okay. So what s'up?"

"You ready to go?"

"Okay. Let's go."

"See, we got to school on time. Aren't you happy I woke you up, my love?"

"Ya, ya ya. So what you got now?"

"I got first period history. I'll see you later, okay?"

So the class goes on and Angela was slacking off, so the teacher said, "Angela, can you tell me who Mary Landerson is?"

"Ummm, no."

"Well, pay attention."

"Yes, mam."

"Many Landerson was a young girl that lived in a beautiful house by the forest crossing the bridge here in our state, Pennsylvania. She lived alone. She was in love with this guy named Angelo. They were happy, so happy that she was going to give him anything he wanted. But one night Mary was walking home. Three drunk guys were drinking under the bridge. She walked past them and they started talking to her. She got scared and the guy said, 'Don't be scared. We won't hurt you,' and she said, 'Please don't hurt me.'

"Mary tried to run but the guys were faster than her. They got her and they stripped her clothes off and they started to abuse her. She started crying and the guys said, 'If you say anything, we're going to kill you,' so when she scrambled, the guy pulled out his gun and shot her in the chest, so the guys started running and she was left by herself under the bridge."

"So what happened next, Ms. Cathren?"

"It been ten years now and no one, no one knows what happened. The legend goes that anybody that goes inside the bridge, he never comes out, 'cause she out and gives no mercy."

"Well, class, that's all for today. You all excused."

"That hella cool. I can't wait to tell my boyfriend about this."

To Be Continued.

-Anthony LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Great, really scary story. You always have a wild, dramatic sense of imagination. You really know how to build up suspense. Did anything like this ever happen to you in real life? We can't wait to read what finally happens in your next installment!

i wish i could tell you
how much, how much

how much i love
i wish I could

I Wish I Could Tell You A Lotta Things . . .

Yo! But I can't. I got some hints, though! I wish I could tell you how happy I was. How good it feels to wake up and spend the day in the same clothes as yesterday, wit' the same ninjas all around me, in the same place, eatin' the same shhh each weekend! I wish I could tell you that shhh and mean it, but I can't, 'cause that shhh ain't true and the kid ain't ever been no liar! Word!

However, I wish that I could tell you how awful they treat me here and how The Beat don't come and go every single Friday to show me mad love. Or how Pauline comes in here hella mad that she came and wasted her time to spend Friday evening with me, with us. How these older cats don't kick us no knowledge, just play us all the time, 'cause they don't want to see us make it. But I can't, 'cause that ain't true either, and I told you, the kid ain't no liar. Word!

I wish I could tell you all that I don't appreciate the love... I really do, but shhh, I'm nothin' but a filthy criminal, so why should you believe me in the first place? Yo, it's the thought that counts, right?

-B Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You told us plenty in your piece. Your words hit us hard too. You have great skills. WE can see how much you care for yourself and how bad you want to get home. There is so much to do, we hope you do not waste more time within the walls of the system. We hope when you get home you stay home and succeed! You are so much more than the label you drop on yourself. Keep teaching and challenging yourself, your speaking loud and clear!

I Wish

i wish i could tell you
how much i miss you
i wish i could tell you
how much i miss being free
i wish i could tell you
why i did it
i wish i could tell you
how much i want to get out
i wish i could tell you
how much i was in school
i wish I could tell you
how much i read
i wish I could tell you
how much you make me think
i wish I could tell you
how much i wish i could see
i wish i could tell you
how much i would say to you
i wish i could tell you
how well i've learned my lesson
i wish i could tell you
how much i hate jail
i wish i could tell you
how much i hope that you
are out doing what
you're supposed to be doing
i wish i could tell you
how much my life has changed
i wish i could tell you
how much, how much
how much i love
i wish I could

-Tae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In your poem about wishing, you are dishing out a whole lot of what you say you wish you could, like by the end we understand how much you would love to be out there doing what you should. It's not like everything gets easy with that one more chance, but sometimes as hard as it gets, we finally understand that if we don't do our very best to pass the test of refraining from those easy substitutes we used to use — like so many of our homies still do — we will just continue to lose to all is lost, giving up either our freedom or our lives as the final cost.

When I Was Little

When I was little, I used to think I was a train driver. Why I say this is because I used to love trains, and I used to play on the railroad tracks all the time, trying to throw rocks over the big hill.

I used to have so much fun! I always waited for the train to come and screamed when it came. And the guy on it used to throw me an orange flag — and I took it to the house! Then one day on my birthday, my mom got me a train set. It was real big! I fell in love with it and never left the basement, playing with it until I finally got older and left it alone.

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like you had a great childhood, even if you were something of a loner — you knew how to have fun on your own. And your mom showed you some love with that train set! This is one of those Neverland (Peter Pan) stories where we almost wish you never had to grow up, and for sure wish you never had to come here.

Ranch, Here I Come

Man, what's up Beat? It's your boy Young Stub and I am on my way to the Ranch for seven months. It's not about shhh 'cause I am done with this shhh when I come home. This shhh not what it is no more. All we doing is dying or getting locked up, and I'm not trying to do none of them. I got a good life for me to be here for. I can't throw my life away like that. For my young homies in here, do this shhh and get it over with. You really not missing nothing on the block.

-J-Stubba B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're proud of you for making the decision to stop allowing yourself to get locked up and messing up your future. We appreciate the advice you give to the young homies in here, but even if not a single one of them understands the importance of what you're saying, you are making the most important decision of your life, and your life is the only one you can control. Go for it!

I Ain't Goin' Out!

Not me, I'm not goin' to be runnin' in and out of jail.
My life is not goin' to amount to nothin'.

I'm gonna be somebody, trust that.

I won't let myself settle for less, when I know I'm a person that can have much more.

I'm not goin' to be just another statistic, 'cause I have now realized that you cannot get rich in the life of crime.

You're gonna have to step yo' game up,
So while I'm shinin' like the lights on my caddie.
You gonna be down like that pen in your pocket.

All you haters gonna have to hate a little more

'Cause once I do this time

I'ma be out and eatin' 'right

So when you flag me down

Don't trip cause I see you

I just ain't stoppin'

All that sellin' dope

Strippin' ninjas and licks is old

you gonna strip or run up in the wrong house

And it's gonna be closed casket.

All I got to say...

... is stay out of them dangerous ways.

-Lil' Naud, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is more than just a (brilliant) poem, it's a Declaration of Arnaud's Independence... you need to clip this out of The Beat and keep it in your pocket. Memorize it, say it to yourself when you have doubts, say it to yourself when you have temptations, stay independent! This is the promise from your strongest self to your strongest self. Keep it.

Out Of Here

Man, this M Beezy, and I'm about to be out of here to another program. But this time it's going to be different because I don't plan on running. I plan on going and doing this time because a ninja get tired of having to run every time he see the police. But this time when I leave I have a plan and it's not to come back here, and to get my life straight. All I need is one last chance to be free and I'm gone do something with it, on ma momma cousin. Everything is gone be right when I get free, a different life style (I'm tired).

-M Beezy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You don't know how good it makes us feel to read that you've got a plan that doesn't include coming back to jail. We understand why you're tired of this ('cause we're tired of seeing you here). Don't fall for the trap of thinking that freedom is paradise, though, MB, because there are still plenty of daily tests and stresses to deal with. At the same time, making that firm decision to change so that you don't have to go through this again is the most important step in a long journey. Now, just keep walking.

When I Was Little

when i was little

i used to think that me and my family
would never be like it is now

when i was little

i thought my moms would never
cut on me and the rest of my family

when i was little

everything in my life was going good
when i was little

i would never have to leave my home
because my pops did not want me there
when i was little

me and my twin never had fights
when i was little

i never had to go out and steal
when i was little

i said i will never have babies
when i was little

i never had to watch my back
when i was little

i never heard of the hall
and was not even thinking about it
but i'm not little no more
and this ain't half of the shhh
(stay up to all out there)

-Freeman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." You can't change all the terrible things that have happened to you in the recent past, but you can change the decisions you're making in the ongoing present, and that will change your future. If you're a father now, you owe it to your child, 'cause stealing to buy your baby new shoes won't mean as much as staying free so your baby has you!

Wishes For My Grandmother

i wish my grandmother was still here
i wish she could hear my cry's at night

i wish Ora Lee Johnson was here
to see my high school graduation

i wish she could come back

but i know she is watching over me

i wish my angel was sitting next to me
to feel my pain and tears from her death in 2004
only a few weeks before my eighth grade graduation
i wish i could've said good-bye
your grandson —

-Jermaine, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ah, this poem's a real tear-jerker, man. And we know your grandmother is dropping tears on your open wounds in hopes that heaven-sent love will heal them soon. But she's not only watching over from heaven, she lives in your heart, and anytime you need to talk to her, look for her there. Also, this is the most beautiful "good-bye" we can imagine.

Why?

You are my everything that I love
 Why are you in jail and not at home?
 Why are you not with my family?
 Why are you not in my life right now?
 Why are we not married
 And your last name will be J...?
 Why am I not with you?
 Matter a fact
 Why aren't we together
 In a better life?
 Baby, I got yo' letter
 Why did you run?
 I was glad that you were in there
 You are my everything
 Why did we leave each other
 And can't talk or feel or smell each other?
 Why are you so far away
 And I can't kiss your sexy lips?
 I got a picture from my ninja
 For his girl
 Baby, you are my diamond forever
 And I will cherish you forever
 Baby, I love you

-Young Harlem LCERS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's really hard when you're inside and so is your lady, and if she's confused, hurt or in trouble, you can't do anything to help her. Nor can she help you. Can the two of you give each other strength while you're both incarcerated and when you are free to better your lives? So, when you're out, can you encourage each other to go to school, get some work, so you can be together and get your lives moving ahead?

When I Was Little...

When I was little, I used to think I was gone never go to jail. I never thought I was gone live the life I live, running from the police, coming back and forth to YGC, on my way to CYA. And now that I think about it, all the things I did was not worth it. That's why when I get free, I'm going to change a lot of stuff, like finish school and get a job.

-Big Bills B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We're glad that you've finally gotten so tired of this that you plan to make some changes when you get out. Why do you think it took coming to jail and being on the run to figure out that this way of living isn't worth it? Finishing school is the foundation you will need to move out of this lifestyle and into one that doesn't threaten your life or your freedom, so be sure to keep that promise.

If Mom Can Do It, So Can I

When I was little, I used to think about nothing. But when I was little I used to wish I was dead because my life was messed up. I had no daddy and my mom was doing her. But I can't blame her for my mistake because of what she was doing. But at the same time, when she was doing her, she made sure me and my brother and my sisters and food was taken care of. That's why I have so much respect and love for my mom.

She never did that stuff around us. But now my mom is doing good. Now she have a new better life and I'm glad and I'm proud of my mom for what she's doing. So, since she changed her life, it's time to change mine.

-Man Man B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, we're proud of your mom, too. And we're proud of you for letting her example inspire you to make the changes you know you have to make. One day, you'll be a father and you'll want to be present for your children's growing up so you can guide them in the choices they'll have to make, just as you wish your mom had been present to guide you. Now that you're both on the mend, you can each be the support that the other will need. Good luck!

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I could tell you
 that I really do love you and how I wish you were here with me so we can have those mother, daughter conversations.
 I wish I could tell you
 how I wish we could go to the mall and go on shopping sprees.
 I wish I could tell you
 how I wish you never left me as a baby and just kept me 'cause I
 am your child and I deserve to be with my mother like every other child deserves to.
 I wish I could tell you
 how much pain you've caused me and how much I'm hurting.
 I wish I could tell you
 that I think about you all the time and how I miss you very much.
 Last but not least, I wish
 you were here to listen to all these things.
 I wish I could tell you...
 but God has taken you from me and placed you somewhere much better.

-Miss B GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very touching part of you that you just shared with us. Thank you. We hope it doesn't hurt your feelings to tell you that we were strangely relieved when we read that last line. All the way through your poem, we thought your mother had abandoned you when you were very small, and we were going to write about how much pain it must have been for her to do that. But she left you unwillingly, and we hope that lessens your pain just a little. And you know something? It's easy to see that your mother is still with you, even now, even here! So, what can you do to become the beautiful person she wanted you to be? How can you show your love through your actions?

My Old Style

I wish I could tell you why I formally acted the way I have been. For the past three years I have been acting like a child doing things I knew were wrong. Hurting the people that love me most, and being loyal to people that never cared.

I wish I could tell you why

I was so naïve

I wish I could tell you

I am still the same, but I've given my life to god and my focus is my unborn child and my family. I wish I could tell you I going to be ok and I am.

-Sugar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like the what you're saying Sugar. Remember that everything you do, everything you eat, drink, every emotion you feel, reverberates through the child growing in your belly. Keep up the good work and remember how that little being is depending on you.

I Wish

I wish I could tell you what's really in my head
 What's pumpin' in my blood
 The urge that I have and need to do
 The plan that I got for when I get out
 That girl that's waitin' for me to get out
 And the kid that she said she had when I call
 The promise that I made mom before I got caught
 But broke
 So now that I think about it
 I wish I could tell you to tell them I'm sorry.

-Macky-O B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You don't need us to tell them you're sorry, you've just told them yourself! We hope you show this short but meaningful poem to your mom and to your girl so they will have no doubts about how you feel. But, of course, the best way to show them how you feel is to put the promises you make to them ahead of whatever your own immediate desires are (the kind that lead you to be taken from them). That way, when you get out of here, you'll do what you have to do to stay out of here and show them how you feel.

Figuring It Out

Today is October 17th 2006. I'm sitting in YGC unit B4 planning about how I'm going to turn around my life for the better. First, I have to change my negative thought pattern to change my negative behavior. Also, I have to realize that ain't nobody gone do me for me, know what I'm talking 'bout. Like the block, homies, females always gone be there — the negative always there and the positive.

What I'm saying is if you choose to do something, don't look for the acceptance of the homies 'cause only you gone pay for the crime or receive the award. Ya see everybody coo' when you in the same struggle doing the same shhh e'ry day. Ninjas know what I'm talkin' 'bout.

But when you decide to do the right thing people start to hate because you not in the struggle. But that's where you separate yo' homies from the sucka-ass haters 'cause yo' homie gone tell you, "Do dat bra. Get up outta here. Be better than this 'cause you got the brains. I respect you for that."

-Reese C-Cup B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: And we respect you for this! We think you're standing at the edge of responsible adulthood, and the exciting thing about that is that we have watched you move slowly forward to reach this launching pad. You're almost ready to launch out into the world, and to do it right. Not that it will be easy, but what about your life has been easy up to now? Just keep investing in yourself, and soon you will have banked a lifetime of accomplishments to be proud of. We have high hopes for you because you have high hopes for yourself!

Mind Made Up

I'm locked up an' the court won't let me out.
I see my mom shedding tears, an' that shhh stress me out.

I'm in here, an' I wish I could be out there,
But then my mind wasn't prepared,
And now that my mind is prepared
The court is afraid.

But now they see that am doing good things,
And I hope I can be released on Oct 25, '06,
And for the court can see that I made up my mind
To stay with my family, and to take care of mine
For me and my mom can be happy and live in peace
Like a son and a mother supposed to be.
And until next time, there's my poetry.

-Lil' Rider B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope the court sees that you deserve to go home, too, Lil' Rider, but the real challenge for you is going to be when you hit the streets again, isn't it? We're proud of you for deciding not to cause your mom to shed any more tears over your behavior, but are you ready to resist all the temptations on the outs that lead you here? Whenever you feel yourself getting weak, being tempted, then recall your mother's tears, and that should make it easier for you to say "No."

I Wish I Could Tell You

I could tell you the real deal on my life. For me to be fifteen, I have seen and been through more things then you can imagine, but I don't let that determine my future. The choices I made got me here and I'ma suffer the consequences.

When I get out, I am gonna be totally different. I seen a few things that had me thinkin'. I seen a ninja get hit in a car, and his head busted all over it.

-A B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We are always encouraged when we read that people are thinking, especially if they are thinking outside their usual limits. It seems to us that is exactly what you are doing. You recognize your own responsibility for your situation, so we hope you'll reconsider the nickname you've chosen. We'd rather see you choose a nickname that you truly want to come true, like "student," "scholar," or "Out of the ordinary." We'd also love to know some of the new things you've been thinking about.

We Need To Figure It Out

Damn, I don't know what to write about this week. As always, to hell with the U.S. government. I don't understand why the world is the way it is. Yes I do. I just wonder why everyone are followers afraid to be themselves, afraid to step out to try to figure out who we really are. People listen to things but never process the information or try to use it in their lives.

We live in a messed up situations but people got it worse. Other countries people jackin' other people for a decent pair of shoes. Poverty is all around and yet we all greedy tryin' to get shoes and clothes that only worth \$20.

It's all a condition. We all conditioned to think this way. Don't be a follower. Down with the government. I don't know I gotta go. And forget the peace. Peace don't exist in this cold world. But peace within our own communities and our own people.

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: For you, this is a very short piece. But it's still packed. You are very impatient — and we think that's a good thing. There is no reason to be patient with ignorance or greed or stupidity. So keep educating yourself, and then passing on what you learn. One word of caution, however: Our government is becoming more and more restrictive or our rights every day, so at least be aware that when you write things like "Forget the U.S. government" or worse, you MIGHT be inviting the attention of the very people who have almost unlimited power to mess you over. That is not a warning to keep quiet, but a warning of just what you're up against!

When I Was Little

When I was little I used to think about if my mom and dad would stay together because I used to see them fight all the time. I used to think about if they did break up what my life would be like. But now I know.

My mom got murdered in January 2006, and after that, my favorite uncle got shot in the head and chest. So we had two funerals to go to a week apart. So I grew up rough because when I was seven years old, my mom and dad broke up, and I went with my mom, me and my brother and three sisters.

My mom had us till I was 11 or 12, and I moved with my dad. Ever since then I been with him in the City (San Francisco), and my mom stayed in Oakland. But her boyfriend beat her to death. The last time I saw her was one month before she died. That's when she came and got me out of here YGC.

-G-Boa B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've commented before about what a terrible burden this is for you to have to carry around with you. How did your dad deal with your mom's murder? What happened to the killer? Why do you think some men think it's all right to beat up on women? Would you ever hit a woman?

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I could tell you what happened the night I got arrested, but I don't even know for sure. All I know is waking up in the hospital with my face all messed up and eye too — and now I'm scarred for life.

But at least I'm alive and breathing. You feel me? It could have been worse for me. I could have been blinded or even dead, and I wouldn't even have known what was happening. Just imagine how the effect it would have had on my family, especially my parents, my life being over at such a young age. But by I thank God every day for giving me another chance in life.

-Barty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: No one wants to be blind, but blindness doesn't mean your life is over, even if it means life as you've known it is. Today, being blind doesn't mean you have to be a beggar in the street or a burden on your family. You can still get an education and a job. But you're right that you're blessed still to have your eyesight as well as your life. The issue is, do you have the will power to make yourself a blessing to your parents and the world you live in. It's a long road ahead of you, but you still can do!

When I Was Little I Used To Think

What it do Beat? This ya boy M Beezy. Y'all know where I'm from if ya'll know who I be. But when I was little, I used to think I would never get older. I was small and I used to look at other people like they were God just because they were older and bigger than me. But now I'm growing up hella fast and I wish I could go back to the old days when I was free and not coming to jail, because I hate this shhh. This shhh ain't cool and now I realize it.

-M Beezy B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We recognize the feelings you described as a child, looking at all the older and bigger people and wishing you were one of them. Until you find yourself older and bigger, and then wish you could go back to those days. This may be the universal feeling of every child everywhere. Of course, that can't happen, but good things can happen, especially now that you realize you're not willing to live with the consequences of your past behavior. By redesigning your future behavior, you are also redesigning your future consequences... And we think you're going to be happy with the changes.

Getting Out

What's up with The Beat? Man, I been in here 90 days and ain't no telling how long I'm goin' to be in here. They tryin' to send me far away, but when I get out. I'm going to have to change my life because this shhh ain't for me on the real tho', 'cause I been in here too many times.

Ain't no tellin'... I could be out with a group of girls instead of bein' in here with a group of boys. But I could really be out helping my grams with my little brother or something. Man I want to get out.

-D-B B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, you've been here too many times. It's time for a change. Besides going out with a group of girls on the outs, what else do you plan so keep yourself free?

Rough Days

I been through rough days in my streets of west Oakland, like a lot of people 'cause it's real everywhere. Try not to waste your time by doing nothing. The physical life is short, accomplish something, set some goal. We go' to achieve it!

Set a bigger one when devastated, but 9/11 happened for a lot of us 400 years ago. 9/11 happened to me when I lost my mama, when I was a lil' boy to the street. 9/11 happened to me, when the system was trying to steal me for the second time in my life. 9/11 has happened to all of us one time or another.

Let's get this clear into our hearts, death is inevitable! It's in between that and birth that you must find out the reason that you are still breathing. I'm still searching for my reason to be alive. Maybe I've found out why, but just haven't realized it yet in how I'm living my life.

If y'all got a God-given talent, why not we just use what he have gave us? We only live once, and I don't want to have to live by regretting everything I have done. But we all live and learn. That's some gangsta talk, therefore the real will know. But the fake will know nothing about it, because the real know who the real is. Know that!

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sometimes you may feel like you'll only get to follow God's intention for you if you get that second chance out there on the street. In truth, God's intention is for you to live and breathe his truth wherever your life takes you. So decide to live your life right, starting today. In this piece, you are doing God's work (except maybe for that real versus fake talk, 'cause when you get real with God, you see there's hope for all to get real, against all odds).

Be Yourself

Kids grow up wanting to be like someone they see. They see all the good things those people have. But really why should you try to be like someone else. Just be yourself. People in the 'hood especially see their big homies and want to do things like them, but they only see the good, but look past the bad. So they act like them, yet when they go to jail they complain about it.

But the people they try to be like go through the same shhh. So why try to be like someone when you could be something better? Why say you could only be as good as that person, when you could do better? But really, just be yourself.

-Yung Bird B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The real problem is that children don't see the world for what it is but for what they want it to be. We give the kind of advice you're giving here all the time, but until a person is grown up enough actually to hear it, they're going to continue to act like children — meaning, they are going to continue trying to be just like the older boys and girls they think they want to be. Do you think it would benefit very young kids (6-10) to be taken into juvenile hall to see the other side of things?

I Still Want to Play Professional Basketball

When I was little I use to think that I was going to be a basketball player and be in the NBA.

I used to be on a basketball team, and I used to love playing basketball everyday! I used to think basketball was my life, but when I got into high school, that's when I started messing up. I started hanging around with the wrong people.

But I still play basketball, and when I get out, I am going to play for a junior college (aka a community college) for two years. Then I'm gonna go to a four-year university for the next two years and get my BA. Then I will try to play for an overseas basketball team, like in Europe.

So that's it. Peace out, Beat! this yo' boy, Lil' Sam. God bless.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a pretty decent plan, just stay open to new opportunities that reveal themselves as you as you follow through. For example, you might wind up as a high school basketball coach, helping youngsters just like you stay in school and off the street. Playing basketball can be an end in itself, or it can be a way of maintaining mental health while you rise above the street, its drugs, insanity and deceit.

My Wound

Errica —, was a part of my wound, because I was out in the streets with her for about two to four weeks and she was letting me believe she loved me. But she didn't.

I was bein' hard headed when my mom would tell me to handle my business, go to school and get a education so I can be somebody, and I didn't listen to her. Instead I let a female who I used to love, get me caught up. But now I can say that I am better than that, and I can't let nobody bring me away from my gift and tell me I'm not going to be nobody.

When I get out, I have to stay away from Errica, so I can follow the right steps and not get myself in trouble. When I go home, I'm going to let my mom tell me things that I don't want to hear, 'cause maybe its true and I need to take that as advice from her to me. Then I can show my family that I'm going to be a basketball player and not have anymore wounds for myself.

I was a part of my wound, but Errica made it worse. Now I'm happy 'cause she's not with me. Now she's nothing and I'm something.

-Stella, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yes, you do have to stay away from Errica, because she's still in the streets and you don't want to go back there. We applaud your decision to start listening to your mother, who only wants what's best for you, but it may not be easy when your mother's telling you what you don't want to hear and Errica's telling you what you do want to hear. Stay strong in your resolve. Move on and stand tall.

my life is nothing but bad luck.
It all started before I was born

From The Beat: Can you trace the story back to when you hit the path to juvenile? Can you go back to the one decision that set you on the path? Was it the same day you got arrested, or a month before, or a year before? That would be a powerful story for a good writer like yourself to tell – and The Beat wants to hear it.

When

When I was little I used to think that I wouldn't end up like the older kids I'd see in the streets. I thought I would grow up to be different.

Now I'm just like them, in and out of jail, and livin' like a low-life — smokin', drinkin', poppin' and kickin' it. So now I'm up in here, and I hate this place!

To everyone, keep yo' head up! To all the other Asians caught up in this system, stay up.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's okay to feel hurt and depressed, if it's part of a process of breaking free from the past. Let it motivate you to reclaim your dream of being different from the other kids in your scene — quit the mob: get an education and a job.

Turn Myself In, Turn Myself Around

What's up, Beat? How's life been treating you? This is Louis from Hayward, California, United States of America. I'm writing you from Alameda County Juvenile Hall, 2200 Fairmont Drive in San Leandro, California. I just want to inform everyone in the county that I'm going to court on Wednesday, the twenty-third of October — and, hopefully, the district attorney won't have nothing bad to say about me since I turned myself in.

I am currently in the "meds" unit doing my program, but I will be turning eighteen very soon. I just want to tell the government representing the people of the United States that for the crimes I committed in the past, I am very sorry. I am hopeful that I can get my record sealed at some time in the future. Now, may peace upon everyone in the universe!

-Louis, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't speak for the DA, but we can say that if you use your remorse to motivate a change in how you handle yourself in the present and the future — yes, you should be able to seal your juvenile record one day. Then you can live your life with a clean slate, living responsibly and productively in these here United States.

Survival

i had to shoot and fight just to survive on the street
because haters tried to make it impossible for me to eat
police catch you late night and you get your ass beat
didn't feel safe if i wasn't carrying heat
always lookin' over my shoulders for enemies that creep
this ain't no movie ninjas playing for keeps
got to stay on point keep one eye open while you sleep
takin' advantage of the people that's weak
got to watch yo' friends 'cause some of them want to see you
leak

people dying left and right, murder rate at it's peak
dirty cops see you eatin' so he wants a piece
i'm speaking of the west, same as the east
thinkin' you earnin' respect by actin' like a beast
sometimes i question is this the life for me
different turfs filled wit' envy and hate
try to kill you because of the money you make
will i see twenty-five, will i live to that date
or will i get life and forever be a ward of the state
ignorance all around me bragging about the increase of the
murder rate

pray to god every night, i hope he isn't late
 spending the rest of my life in jail, will that be my fate
 this experience to change my life, is that what it takes
 shhh, i'll change my life if i get this break

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Have we printed this one before? It still stands up, but do you still stand with that promise to change. 'Cause here's the thang — can't bargain with God, no way. You've got to make the promise first, for better or worse, swear the change and begin to today — 'cause God looks for a committed heart, not someone who points to the dotted line and waits for God sign before he'll start to do his part. You feel? That's we mean by — keep it real.

Being Little Was The Best Times

when i was little
i thought i'd never be in jail
being little was
i'm guessing
the best times of your life
because you won't have to worry
about anything or do anything
you're pampered until you're old enough
to do things on your own
when you're young
every time you get in trouble
you'll either expect yelling
or getting slapped upside the head
but things aren't like that
when you get older and mess with the law

-Laurente, 150 Crew

From The Beat: While you do have to get older, you don't have to mess with the law. Crime is not a requirement of survival, 'cause when you get older you can get a job — some kind of job, part-time while you're in school — to make your money. Sure, you do have to hustle when you're older, but if you find a legal and legit hustle, you don't have to worry about the law. Right? Maybe it's time for a chance.

A Thin Line Between Love and Hate

Love is a strong feeling that you can't explain, like love for your family and friends. The people I love, I keep close, and I keep in touch with them as much as possible. You never know when you'll need them the most, so don't lose contact with them.

As for the ones I hate, I stay away from them 'cause if I go anywhere near them I'll act a fool. See the people I hate are the people who helped me put myself in jail while they're still having all the fun on the outs. That's the thin line between love and hate, because they're also the people I would always hang with. So, watch out for that thin line.

Meanwhile, this is your crazy uncle Fairlas saying peace out. See ya next time. Lastly, Live your life and nobody else's.

-Fairlas, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Since they're the ones you spent time with before your incarceration, we have two questions: (1) How will you avoid seeing them? And (2) how will you fill your time so you won't wind up posted up and looking for trouble with them or whomever? Do you have a job lined up? If not, how do you plan to go about looking for one? 'Cause if you don't get money legally, you'll be tempted to get it illegally and risk your freedom if not your life.

It's So Easy, Or So I Thought

When I was little, I used to think life was easy. Life was a piece of cake and you could get away with anything. I could even get away with stealing (robbery). But as I get older those robberies got me up in juvenile hall.

When I was little, I'd just have one thing in mind about stealing — and it was candy. Stealing candy is not much of a crime because it is easy to steal. Eventually, that candy turned into money, cars, purses, wallets, etc.

What I'm trying to say is — if I would never have tried to steal candy, later I might not have robbed stuff to get me in juvenile hall. And I think I would have been a young man that does good in school if I didn't steal.

-Lil' Mike, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think you're seeing pretty clearly, even if it is not necessary to go from stealing candy to robbing people, that whole mentality of getting away with whatever you can get away with is a road that leads straight to two things: (1) stealing bigger, and (2) getting caught. Plus, you're right that doing your school is a wholly different mentality than "getting over" on whomever or whatever — it's the earning it by working for it mind-set that trains you to succeed in life and stay free doing it. But you know — it's — not — too — late — to — chance!

To Be

be all that you can be
try to make history
do it for yourself
the positive way
have a dream
with high self-esteem
spend time with your family
and not on the streets
thinking you're grown
that's not the right thing
especially you broke ninjas
still living at home
just something i felt like writing

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And we're glad that you wrote it. That's some straight advice, and those who aren't ready to hear the positive for sure aren't ready to do it! On the other hand, maybe somebody reading your words will agree, and do what it takes to live right and stay free!

When I Was Little Halloween Was Real

When I was little, I used to think that Halloween was when the dead come back alive and mess with you while you was asleep and while you were trick-or-treat'ing. I thought that's why your parent comes with you, to make sure the ghosts of the dead don't take you down with them when Halloween is over.

-Sammie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, to a little kid, that makes a lot of sense, even if we never thought of it that way. Terrific little Halloween piece!

Little Invincible

When I was little, I used to think I was invincible! I would do crazy things and never get hurt, like back flips off my roof! My Grandma was always scared for me. Then I got hit by a car when I was twelve, and I know for real now that I'm not.

-White Boy Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We got a little scared for you just hearing your story. Your poor Grandma! But it's all good now that you know you're not invincible. Right?

When I Was Little I use to think

When I was little I used to think I was going have a lot of money — and my L's, so that my car would stop getting took by them boys! I used to think I was going be in the NBA.

Where I'm at now, is stopping me, but I'm a keep it lit! When I get out, I'm a go to college and get smart on everybody — and prove to everybody as well as myself, that I can make something of myself!

Oakland is the best spot to be. There's everything out here. When I was little, I used to think that I was always going to be the kid that everybody loved to see play! Now I'm in the Hall and off to CYA — and my game is on stop 'till I get out. That's what I used to think when I was little.

-Kash Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Basketball is cool, but youngsters need to use it as a tool to help them stay in school. And if a few go to the NBA, many more can graduate from university with a BA, ready to pick up a job with decent pay so they can live right and raise a family the right way. Since you're on your way to CYA, use it to get your high school diploma (or your GED), and then start on college classes which you can continue when you're free. Also take whatever technical training classes they offer, plus volunteer for work of any kind — 'cause you need to develop good work habits while you keep developing your mind. Then when you're released, try out for your college basketball team, 'cause it may not be too late to pursue your dream.

Mom I Wish I Could Tell You.

I wish I could tell you why my life is going bad,
I wish I could tell you what I have been going through,
And how it affects my family
I wish I could tell you how much money I make,
a day and what's going on, on the block.

I can't tell my mom because I do so many bad things,
That she'd think my life was wasted on the streets. I do those things

For money. My moms got a good job as a nurse
But doesn't give me an allowance to do the things I want to do
She thinks it's good I got locked up so I'm not on
The streets, in the wrong place wrong time but as long as I go to school

It's ok with her what I do. She wants me to get an education.

Love is...a lot to me

Change is...a difficult thing in life to make
Because sometimes bad happens on the streets and I happen to be there

I'm proud of living the life I live and being on the earth with my family

I'm stressing about being locked up and thinking about my niece and nephew.

-Jakari, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you're stressing about being locked up, and you're locked up because you need money, maybe you could sit down and talk honestly with your mom about the misunderstanding between you two? Though she might get frustrated about you, no one loves you more than your mother. If you talk to her like an adult, with ideas, rather than like a child with only needs — maybe you can save yourself from the street money jail trap? We hope you find a way.

I WISH I COULD TELL YOU

that i love you so much
my baby jessica i miss you
and hopefully when i get out of here friday
i will see you and tell you myself
how much i love you
i really miss you a lot
and i thought over all the mistakes
i made in the past
and i am never going to make the same mistakes again
i promised myself it is my first time here and my last
hopefully i get out soon
so i can finish school and continue working
and get my life straight.

-Francisco, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds as if you have done some important thinking, and all that remains is following through on your decision to go to school and work and get your life straight. Maybe you can use your love for Jessica as a motivation to do right out there, so you don't have to separated like this again.

Since You Left

I wish I could tell you all the shhh that done happened since you went to paradise, bruh. It seems like since you left us everything went bad!

It's crazy 'cause God didn't even give me a chance to say bye, but that's kinda beside the point. You know life is crazy, 'cause God put you wit' a lot of souljahs to start off wit' — I guess, to live and learn. But the ones that's ahead of their time, I guess have to go home early. Bruh, its still us out there 'til we come home. Rest in Peace.

-Lil' Will, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The most important lesson to learn is to get off the street and out of harm's way. Maybe when you were little it was the only way you could make money, but that's not true anymore. You could get some kind of part-time job if you really tried. Think about — 'cause you don't need "to go home early".

Halloween In the Hall

i'm the kid going treat-or-treatin'
the staff are the ghosts and the monsters
i knock on my door and ask for candy
i get — "room time" the staff shouts
they can't stand me
halloween is a very fun day
staff make' me mad and i wanna run away
i keep my nose up on october thirty-first
but bein' incarcerated makes this day the worst
— i'm getting released on halloween
to the staff door i race
trick or treat, she slams the door in my face
it's very windy outside, the trees are shakin'
the staff sayin' "weak" and I say "stop hatin'"
it starts to rain and my bag is fat
sometimes i think some staff want me on crack
but don't get me wrong, most staff go
romance on halloween, watch the wind blow
staff, family, but my mom is the best
to have the momma i got, man
— i know i'm blessed

-Lil' Mooka, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is one heckuva Halloween song, not just memories of the past but trick or treat in the Hall with all the pain that comes along. Still, you see your way clear through to gratitude for blessings you've received from staff and family, but most of all from your loving mother whose supportive attitude blows stronger than the demonic calamity of an incarcerated Halloween's systemic inhumanity.

YMCA Haunted House

once upon a time
there was a haunted house
inside the y m c a
every time you'd walk inside
you'd hear ghosts and spooky voices
you'd feel spiders crawling on you
see ghosts flying around
people's eyes popping out
blood gushing out onto your body
walking into spider webs
seeing people dying
dead bodies lying around

-LaRonte, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like a trip! Did it make you lose your grip? And later did you laugh about it? It sounds like a classic haunted house! Were you glad or sad when you walked out?

2005 Halloween

it was halloween and i was mad
because my brother got hit by a car
it wasn't bad but he got his arm broke
so i was mad and called all my friends
and we went on a hot mission
stealin' fightin' robbin' and talkin' trash
at last i went back home
and had some funny thoughts
going through my head
every time i'd look at my brother's gun
i was mad at the whole world

-Sean, 150 Crew

From The Beat: For your sake (We don't think we've ever written these words before), we're glad you're locked up this Halloween, 'cause you need to think through how you handle your anger — and what you're mad at. We thank you and thank God for not picking up your brother's gun that night you lost your mind, 'cause we know people serving life for exactly that: one crazy night. So you tell us, what was up with your friends? It only makes it harder to stay sane when so-called friends are so ready to ride wit' you out on one. A friend would calm you down and chill you out when he sees and hears you coming out of pocket like that. And your brother needs not to leave that gun lying around waiting for anybody to pick it up and shoot it! You feel?

I Was Scared of Freddy Kruger

When I was little, I used to be scared of Freddy Kruger and Scream — and like Jason. but now I ain't scared of nothing.

Freddy Kruger used to scare me the most, because when I'd go to sleep, I couldn't sleep — because I thought he was going to come in my dream and kill me or something, you know?

I remember when I was seven years old, and I was trick-or-treat'ing in Richmond. I was a G.I. Joe, and when I was walking with my mom, I heard some kind of laugh and giggling. I looked back and I almost started crying — because all I see is a mask of Freddy Kruger!

-Terry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, that stuff is way past scary for a little guy, and falling asleep, starting to dream, is exactly when he'd think himself into a terror, just as you say — 'cause you could die in your dream/sleep! But now, there are still things to be scared of — getting yourself killed in the street or locked up for years at a time. We're just saying it's worth doing everything in your power to avoid such fearful fates, in real life!

Being a Fool

here i am incarcerated
bragging about being a fool
it's time to realize the way i handled things
was not cool
so i can make incarceration
a permanent home or school
but no — i'll learn my lesson
'cause i ain't no fool
i'm not going to remain in the penal system
because i'm more than that
i have soulful rhythm
and i'm 'bout to make better decisions
but somebody help me
because i'm still not free
i'm being begged here
to read my piece
but i'm saying no
covering my face
with my county fleece
it's no use
they could see
my white teeth
so i'm going to give in
'cause my special friend
believe' in me

-Messy Marv, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are indeed no fool, though when it comes down to it, we all must admit — we've done foolish things! All the more so when we see how it brought incarceration, the pain, shame and social blame all our writers are currently facing. So you hid your face for half a min', then gave in, and sang your soulful song — or rather said it out loud — for The Beat Within and the crowd that was waitin' to hear your soulful sound.

I Wish I Could Talk About It!

I wish I could tell you all the bad things I did over the year. I'm only seventeen years old, and you wouldn't even believe me.

I have done a lot of stuff in my years on this earth — that I wish I wouldn't have done! But it's too late now. I just look back at them and think I would never do them again. I wish I could tell you what the things are, but I would be incriminating myself.

I just don't want my lil' brother to go through what I been through.

-Lil' Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you really mean it about never doing those things again, then you have a pretty good chance of helping your brother avoid repeating the same mistakes and going through the same consequences — aside from being locked up, it's not coo' what it does to you! Now set about making amends. Be a positive force in this world, like this is a positive piece for The Beat.

I Never Thought...

When I was little I used to think I would do something with my life I never thought I would end up here in juvenile hall.

My mom would tell me that I could make a difference, but I ask myself how?

I still have a chance to turn my life around but I just don't know were to begin.

It's hard for a mom to raise three children on her own.

You see I never really had a dad. Pops was always in jail and now he's facing a life sentence in San Quentin.

So the trouble began. I used to not go to school sometimes when I wouldn't feel like going, started getting into fights and robbing folks when I needed money. And as I got older I joined a gang, started getting involved in a couple of shootings, just a lot of things that I can't put on paper, things you couldn't imagine a fifteen-year-old could be capable of. And now I'm doing time.

-Hector, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's sadly common for young men whose dads are in jail to also get into trouble that gets them locked up. It's not easy to break the cycle, but it can be done! We hope you have someone to turn to, to ask for help when you get out, so you can save your freedom. Keep writing to The Beat! Remember, you see the problem, now don't let it get the best of you, make the reason why you are a success!

Halloween Story: The Dummy

Back in the day when I was little like the age of eight I went out to Hayward with my family for Halloween. And you know how that is, you go out looking for candy. Anyways, in the process we was walking past some houses and we got to this one house, and when we go to this one house, and we got to the gate we looked at the house, then we made our way to the porch. On the porch was a tub of candy and a mummy doll sitting at the chair. So we started takin' candy and right before we left, THE DUMMY JUMPED UP AND GRABBED ME. That scared the hell out of me.

-Anon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It just shows what a good writer you are, that we almost jumped out of our seats when we got to the punchline to this story! Nicely done. We cant wait for the next episode!

Stay Solid, Pimp This System

Yeah man, this ya' boy On One D writing, still in juvenile hall. I been in here two weeks now man. I got kicked out Camp over some stupid stuff. Man, this system — they is not doing no playing no more! They sending ninjas to the Y over violations man!

I need to get out this place man! My family, man, they getting tired of the stuff I'm doing, man. I know they ain't go' give up on me, but man we need to pimp this system! When we get locked up, you ain't just hurting yourselves, you're hurting yo' loved ones.

Man, the streets is getting grimy, the murder rate going up like a balloon! Man, pimp the system 'cause they pimping us fast. Man this ain't no game no more — it never was, man. Get out the system fast, man, 'fore it get worse, man. Stay solid.

-On One D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We hear the seriousness of what you're saying, and we feel the intensity of it. We don't know what happened at Camp, but we hope you're not saying they're talking about sending you to the 'Y' over it, but that you'll be back at Camp soon. Also, you talk about how grimy the streets are, but that will ask more of you than just pimping the system. Actually that's the problem with using the word "pimp" for what you're talking about, 'cause if you go back to the street and go "on one" — you'll be back (eventually) with charges, just as you say, getting pimped by the system. Can't you see you're setting yourself up not only by mishandling yourself in here but by what you do out there?

I Wish I Could Tell My Momma

I love her... because every night she's on my mind
like a lot of other things,

I can't get no phone calls.

She doesn't visit me

because she's really stressing on me and my family
in and out of the system.

One thing I love about my mom is when I'm down
she's always there to help me.

Another thing I love about her is when I'm mad she makes
me happy. When she's mad I cheer her up, and make her
feel happy.

One favorite time with my mom it's a lot of things.

When my mom asks me to do something I do it
to make her feel happy inside.

I got locked up because I choose to do bad things and make
bad decisions. Mom one thing I want to tell you is when I
get out

I'm gonna handle my program and make you happy
'cause mom That's all I ever want to do.

-Terrance, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We wish we could send this wonderful piece to your mom! She would be so proud to know how much making her happy motivates her son, hopefully to stay of jail and off the streets! You are lucky to have her, and we hope she visits you soon or even better that you get out and show her you are serious this time.

I Wish I Could Tell You Why

i wish i could tell you why i'm here
and i don't mean the crime i committed

i mean the reason my conscience
didn't start eating away at my insides

'till after i came here again
while i was on the outs

i never heard my shoulder angel give me an opinion
but that was probably 'cause my shoulder devil
was louder and naturally that's what i heard
— i hate this place!

-Here And Present, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Actually, you do a pretty good job of telling us why. If everything you say is true, then you need to make a place and space in your life that you set aside to meditate — get quiet and just let your mind talk. When you get quiet enough, that's when you'll start to hear your shoulder angel whisper the truth. There's a story in the Bible about Elijah who listened for God's voice: it wasn't in the thunder and lightning, it wasn't in the earthquake — it was a quiet voice that whispered truth to him. You didn't hear that voice till you got locked in that tiny room.

Feeling The Movement

I wish I could tell you the scenes behind this life I lead
For when I was out I spent my life high yeah not on trees

Yeah I done schemed plotted and even dreamed

About things I would have done

Every time I tried to get it done it was only a vision,
but in my mind it's still being painted like Wes Craven

Now they tellin' me you

And you faced with four felonies

My PO ain't even trying to work with me

But I fear one man no man but this one man

And for my life he got it planned

Just follow these ten rules and never betray him

Like his patna Judas

Read his biography, so now I'm feeling the movement

So judge me to your words I'm sticken' and moving

Yeah you got me by the talke but iin time it will theell

Them I ride for are never losin'

-Gw, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's amazing to see a strong talent like yours being dedicated to singing hip-hop praises. We hope you keep writing these rhymes, and we want to know more about what finding this faith has meant to you? Of all those ten rules, which do you think will be the hardest for you?

Mis Pensamientos Sobre Los Temas

Hola me llamo Franklin y soy de Honduras. Saben amigos, si a mí me dieran dos horas de libertad, conseguiría dinero y me fuera a la Greyhounds directo a la frontera con Canada. Me iría para Vancouver. Voy a ser deportado, puedes entender porque me haría ahí.

Mi lugar feliz era el canton. Llegabamos de trabajar en la tarde y estabamos todos juntos. En nuestro jale (trabajo), te alegras ver que todos regresan porque en este jale uno nunca sabes si regresaras. Cuando estabamos en casa, nos fumabamos nuestra mota y nos relajabamos, escuchabamos música o mirabamos television. Era estupendo estar con la cheves y nuestros carnales.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez era cuando llovía. Andabamos toda la raza debajo del agua que caía del cielo, lebandando agua con los pieces. A mí carnal y a todos los demás nos encantaba mojarnos. Despues nos ibamos a tomar café caliente. Eso es lo que más extraño. Que Dios nos bendiga a todos.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que en otro país tu puedas hacer las cosas correctas que no pudistes hacer aquí? ¿Qué tipo de trabajo estas hablando? Como estas hablando nos hace pensar que estabas trabajando ilegalmente. ¿Estamos correcto? Si si, pues ya ves las consecuencias. Vayas donde vayas siempre viviras las mismas o peor consecuencias sino dejas de trabajar de esa manera. Con respecto a tu niñez, nos alegramos que tengas Buenos recuerdos sobre tu niñez. Cuidate donde sea que vayas. Suerte!

My Thoughts On The Topics

Hello, my name is Franklin and I'm from Honduras. You know what, friends? If they were to give me two hours of freedom, I would make some money and I would go on Greyhound straight to the Canadian border. I would go to Vancouver. I am going to get deported. You can understand why I would go over there.

My happy place was my home. Everyone would get off work in the afternoons and we would all be together. In our line of work, you're happy to see that everyone makes it back home because in this line of work, one never knows if you'll make it back home. When we're at home, we would smoke our weed and we would relax, listen to music, or we would watch TV. It's was stupendous to have some beer and be with our bro's.

What I miss most from my childhood is when it rained. My whole people and I would be under the water that fell from the sky, kicking up water with our feet. Me and my bro and everyone else loved to get wet. Then, we would go and drink hot coffee. That's what I miss the most. May God bless us all.

-Franklin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you believe that in another country you'll be able to do the right things that you were not able to do here? What kind of work are you talking about? Based on the way you were talking in your piece, it makes us think that you're working on something that's not legal. Are we right? Yes, yes, well, now you see the consequences. No matter where you go, if you continue to live the same way, you'll continue to face the same or worse consequences. With regards to your childhood, we're thrilled to know you have good memories from your childhood. Take care of yourself, regardless of where you go. Good luck!

that I look back in my life and think of
all the bad things I've done I think to
myself "I can do better than that"

Lejos Con Mi Novia

Si tubiera esa oportunidad, lo más probable es que me fuera con el pensamiento de regresar a este horrible lugar. También me iría con mi novia lo más lejos que pudiera. Me iría a la playa para poner mi mente en las olas, y no estar pensando en regresar.

Mi lugar feliz tal vez sería estando con mi novia. Puede que sea el lugar donde pueda escaparme de la realidad.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez es andar en la bicicleta, jugar football y los regaños de mi madre.

From The Beat: Eso sería un buen lugar donde relajarse y una buena compañía. La playa es un bonito lugar donde hay mucha paz y una naturaleza bella. Esperamos que cuando salgas tomes en cuenta estos lugares tan bonitos y disfrutes más las cosas que esta vida ofrece, cosas maravillosas.

Away With My Girlfriend

If I had that opportunity, what would probably happen is I would leave with the thought of knowing I would have to come back to this place. I would also go with my girlfriend as far away as possible. I would go to the beach so I could focus my mind on the waves and not be thinking about going back.

My happy place would probably be being with my girlfriend. That's probably because that's the place where I would be able to escape reality.

What I miss the most from my childhood is being on my bicycle, playing football, and the way my mother would yell at me.

-Dimas B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That would be a nice place to relax and that would be some nice company. The beach is a nice place where there is a lot of peace and a natural beauty. We hope that when you get out, you take into account these very nice places and you enjoy the things that this life offers, marvelous things.

No Wrong When I Was Little

When I was little. I use to think that I would never do nothing wrong, that I would always do the right things, that I would listen to my mom and dad every time and that I would never do drugs or steal from nobody or cut school. But as I grew up I started to do these things.

I did drugs I didn't listen to what my parents told me, I cut school and didn't listen to my teachers, I robbed someone, that's the reason why I am in juvenile hall.

Now that I look back in my life and think of all the bad things I've done I think to myself "I can do better than that" and my mom and dad always lecturing me and I get mad, but they just want me to do good in life and I'm starting to see things clear now. I need to stop doing these bad things.

-Eladio, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad to read that you see the need to improve your ways. What steps are you taking to succeed free of the system?

Mom Told Me

when i was little
i used to think there wasn't a juvenile hall
when was little
and used to act up
my mom would say she was go take me up there
i used to tell her she was lying
now that i'm in here
i wish i would had believed her sooner

-Twin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So often young people think Mom is the enemy and want to get all angry and fight, when the whole time she's just trying to help you see clear and get your life right.

Not Paco

...is what I said when they murdered 'em
Now Bob and Willie gone they ain't feelin' me
Not my mom or life can heal me
Wanna beast out,
think I'm militant now?
Wait 'til you see the real me
Up in my cell beatin' on my chest
like a gorilla beast
Take me now 'cause later ain't here for me
But givin' up is not an option
But surrounded by these cats who can't afford steak
but sit at the table looking at the menu and talkin'
about lobster
How fake can you get tell the judge let me know,
ain't got no evidence
And my background is irrelevant

-Militant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Take me now/cause later ain't here for me". Wow, that's a better line than anything we've heard on the radio in a long time. Congratulations - you know you could be a militant for real if you wanted. You could preach about what you've been through, what you've seen - become a real teacher/preacher/inspiration to others. These poems might be only the beginning!

Stuck

I'd rather be stuck in traffic
because in here I feel an ache.
I wish I could see my mom's face
but I'm locked in this cage.
I guess it's my fault
I'm filled with sadness
instead of hope.
I feel the heat at night.
This earth was much cooler
when I was free.
I hear the doors locking.
It's back to my cage
where it feels like flames.

-Edgar, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Fine poem Edgar. We like the way you surprised us by reversing our expectations. That the night burns with the flame of your predicament, in other words, that your brain is on fire, is a cool way to end your poem. Good work.

I Wish I Could Tell You...

I wish I could tell you that it will all be good, that it will be easy, that you'll get through it, and you'll do good - but there's always someone trying to bring you down. But to make it through the hard times, all you need is one solid homie. No 'hey friend' or tricks will see you through. Only the ones who really care will have your back. No matter the circumstance, he won't be behind you or next to you, but in front, with no questions asked. Because just like him, you have your homie's back. That's all you need - friends like that.

-Brett, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: True friendship is precious beyond measure. But you do need more. You need to learn how to be a true friend to yourself. You need to learn to feel that your life is a good thing, the greatest gift you will ever receive. That means respecting yourself - using your brain and your heart to do the right things. We all know how to figure out what's right, even in complicated situations. So, start with being a very good friend to yourself. And perhaps this saying will come to make sense to you: "To thine own self be true. Thou can not then be false to any man."

Life

My life is complicated.
I need to get out the game.
Me and my brother the same,
But I know one day we ain't gon' make it mayn.
Don't get it twisted
I do gets down bra
But being in the streets,
You got to have heat
The streets is weak
Unless you getting money
I got to have that all day
That's what's wrong wit' me
I gotta get rich
Me and my homies
But I got to get out the game
'Cause ain't nothing gon' change
Life hard but I got to survive
Until the day I die
One love, stay up...

-Lil' Suave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Terrific poem revealing a little more of the mystery that is you. You write about surviving a lot ... about how on these streets it's all about survival, but survival is just about the bare minimum, day to day. What you of all people deserve is to LIVE, not survive. Like you say, the streets are weak, and so can you find the strength inside to get out of them?

La Pasaría Con Mi Familia

Bueno, si me dieran la oportunidad de salir dos horas, las aprovecharías para estar con mi familia, mayormente con mi esposa y mis hijas. Las abrazaría, jugaría con mi hija, y le daría un monton de besos a mi esposa. Les diría cuanto la amo. Así pasaría las dos horas más grandiosas de mi vida. Le daría las gracias por ellos.

From The Beat: Creemos que este tiempo lo aprovecharan ellos tambien. Parece que tienes toda una familia completa esperando por ti. La única pieza que falta eres tú. ¿Estas haciendo algo para estar con ellos? Tener un hijo y una esposa es mucha responsabilidad amigo. Es hora que empieces a pensar como adulto.

I Would Spend It With My Family

Well, if they gave me the opportunity to get out for two hours, I would take advantage of it so I could be with my family, in particular with my wife and my daughters. I would hug them, I would play with my daughter, and I would give my wife a bunch of kisses. I would tell them how much I love them. That's how I would spend the two most wonderful hours of my life. I would give thanks for them.

-Darwin B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We believe they would take advantage of this time, too. It appears that you have a complete family waiting for you. The only piece that's missing is you. Are you doing something so you can be with them? Having a child and a wife is a lot of responsibility, friend. It is time for you to start thinking like an adult.

Traffic

The traffic was filling the streets.
It was starting to give me a headache.
My face was beginning to burn from the sun.
It felt like I was in a small cage, for hours.
I started to guess that I was going to be late
and could see the sadness on my sister's face.
The heat was making me sweat
and I could see the sun's rays bouncing off the earth.
I was stuck there, my jaw locked, gritting my teeth.

-Daniel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautifully done. We're right there beside you, stuck in that same traffic, thanks to your terrific writing.

Granny' Baby For Life, Part 2

man, granny, i miss you
and i think i need a tissue
'cause i always cry like a foo'
when i look at that picture of you
but a robbery on a seven/eleven
got your gran'baby stressin'
locked in room lookin' at a picture of you
'cause i miss you, granny, i miss you
and if someone was to spit on your picture, i'd kill 'im
'cause i'll keep this picture fo' life, god willin'
this lil' walt aka granny' baby
locked up in a cell and missin' you like crazy

-Lil' Walt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your granny doesn't want you to kill for her but to live for her, to take the lessons she tried to teach you to heart and give them life by your living right. She wants to see you find the courage in yourself to reclaim the love she gave and put it to work in a positive way, to reclaim your mental health from the devil who rules the street and had you chasing money and power by any means — then when you get locked up or shot up, the same devil laughs like the fiend he is. Who you gonna give your heart to, your granny or the devil's town biz? Don't just drop tears in your granny's name, drop your fear to change — start working on your heart and brain, place your faith above for the sake of your granny's love.

Granny' Baby For Life, Part One

when i was little, i used to think
that my dad would be there
and my mom would be there
but only my granny was there for me
so i love my granny until i die
and when i die i'll still love her
— r i p granny — i wish i could have
told my granny that i love her before she passed
and i wish i could have seen her one day
before she passed away
— r i p granny — i love you
and i'll see you when i get there too

-Lil' Walt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When your grandmother is not only your grandmother but your mother and your father, too, she's like the whole family to you — both your parents and all your ancestors, too. Then when she passes away from the world of the flesh, it's like the hardest test you'll ever face in life. 'Cause you've got to find a way to respect the love she gave you, and repay her spirit that watches you everyday from on high and prays you do right and live well for the rest of your days and nights here on earth. Yes, she's sad you're here on max, but she's glad you're ready to face the facts and reverse your track to find a way to pay her back for all the love and care she shared with you. It sure is a difficult test, but you have no other choice but to do your best.

My Last Kids-Only Halloween

One day on Halloween I was walking with my friends when out of nowhere some crazy guy try to snatch! I was eight at the time, and my friends was around the same age. It was three of us.

We didn't know what he was doing, but I seen him try to grab my friend — and I threw a rock at him! Then we ran to the house and told my mom. She called my dad and my friends' parents and told them what happened.

After that I didn't go out on Halloween unless I was with my mom or dad, or someone who was old enough to come with me.

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: After Christmas, it's the biggest kids' holiday there is, and some lunatic adult has to mess it up like that? Still, we commend your family on taking care of you and using wisdom, 'cause there are crazies out on Halloween, as you learned the hard way.

Surviving

Well, I'm still up in this boring-ash program. I've done three months, and I got a few more months left before I get out. I hope it goes by fast! It feels like I just left home yesterday.

This program's hella easy. It's just hella boring. Rec' is old to me now. They do the same stuff everyday. To tell you the truth, the Camp is starting to lightweight be like juvenile hall. 'Cause we got to do large muscle now, and I hate that stuff. This ain't supposed to be like the hall! There a lot of other reasons why it's starting to be like the hall, but I don't really don't feel like explaining it right now.

I'm just holdin' it down, trying to do coo', so I could go home to my baby'momma. Man, I ain't gonna lie — I'm really in love and I don't give a care what ninjas think. I got her back to the fullest, you feel me! Well, I'm'a do what I got to do to get to her. I mean, I got to get myself together, step my game up, and be a real man.

Well, I'm 'bout to be out till next time. To all doing time, take care. Always remember to stay suited and booted. Gone!

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's cool that you're trying to do what you need to do to walk away free to be with one you love. And ninjas will tease you because they're jealous, and that's the source of all that hating and baiting that goes on at Camp — that and a bogus desire to establish a rep' there as hard. But anyone who has to try to prove he's hard at Camp, has already lost out on reality. What you're choosing to do is hard, and we respect it. But now, don't think it's just a game you need to play while you wait to hit the gate as a free man. The deepest challenge will come when you've left this program behind and you're tempted go back to that old state of mind. In truth, you can't remain a soldier, not in the sense of following orders, and achieve your goal of becoming both a free man and a real man — let's say, a real free man. To do that, you'll have to be an army of one, surrendering your independent thinking to none, except perhaps the one you love.

I Wish I Could Tell You ...

I wish could tell you, but I can't tell you,
what I used to do when I was a two years old,
because my memory doesn't go back that far.
But I bet it was fun doing all the stuff I see my little cousin
do!

-Jacob, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you ever get on the floor and play with your cousin? If you're not too embarrassed, it can be a lot of fun.

Visiting My Past

Well, this past weekend me and my baby'momma went to go visit my dad at his program. He's up in the drug program over in Hayward. He's been there for about two weeks now.

He just got out of the pen' like two months ago. I guess he's talking bout getting his self together. I hope he does, 'cause I really need a father in my life. I think that if I had a positive father figure in my life, I wouldn't be the way I am — but who knows?

Well, I go see him every weekend, on Sunday, when I get my HV (home visit). He seems like he's doing coo' now, but he will only know by what he's doing after he's back out in the world. The visit went coo'. Me and my lady brought him a burrito from the Mexican restaurant nearby. We had lunch together and watched the Raiders finally win a game. I will visit him again this weekend if I go home.

If you could, would you please keep my dad in your prayers so he can do well. Thanks. To all: stay up, be safe, and never let that chin hit yo' chest.

-Lil' Soldier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your father already is a role model if he's doing his drug rehab' program and taking it seriously, whether or not he eventually makes it on the outs. Why do we say that? Because half the battle is admitting to, respecting, and committing to your own desire to get your life together. The idea of rehabilitation from drug abuse is that you must make remaining clean and sober your top priority, 'cause once you surrender your sanity to the active power of your addiction, you're about to lose everything you have because you've surrendered control over your own life to the old insanity of impulsive self-destruction. And yeah, for sure, we're include your father in our prayers, and you, too. But our advice to you and your father both is: pray as if it all depends on God, but act as if it all depends on you! (Great piece, Lil' Soldier. Thanks for stepping up with the real.)

Time ...

is it that time
time for me to unwind
all the feelings and words running through my mind
i should express but, feel no less
for all the words spilling out my chest
and am i the one to blame for all the horrible things
that come out of this game
should i feel shame
as i look now
the time has wound down
open my mouth to speak but hear no sound
feel like a fool
something like a clown
it's just my luck
time has run out
so now i'm going to sit here stuck

-Lil' Lady Skittles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If shame helps motivate you to change so you can steer free of the pain of incarceration (and drug addiction and whatever other pain you were facing through the game you were playing), then feel free to feel shame. But if it's part of a cycle that sends you back to the same old fake escapes that used to make you forget for a sec' or a min' but really only got you deeper in the mess, then forget shame. Just do your best. You're not responsible for the circumstances that led you to the game, but you're responsible for getting out and staying out all the same. Meanwhile set your mind free from the

his house smelled like feet
like his feet stank like a sewer
his house smelled like feet
and he only gave me one piece
of candy because i told him
his house smelled like feet

Am I...

When I was little like at the age of 12 years old, I used to think about my future life and be like man, what's it going to be like after the years.

Am I going to the Hall, grow up and be in and out of the pen, maybe even do life?

Am I going to die soon, am I going to get shot and die off blood loss?

Is one of my family members going to die soon?

Am I going to grow up and be a professional football player?

Am I going to graduate from High School?

Am I ever going to get out of here, so I can be there for my mom and family, so I can support them cause my by brother's case?

Am I going to get out and do the right thing?

-Lil' Vee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The questions you're asking are brave, they're the questions of a young adult who isn't afraid of looking the more frightening parts of life square in the face. It's a crying shame that you even need to be worrying about dying, or about jail, when our wish for you is that you be worried about ordinary teenage questions like "when will my girl call" and "what college should I go to?". But the good news is that you can control the outcome to a lot of these questions. You can decide whether or not you want to go to jail, and you can also decide whether you want to go to high school, whether you want to dream big dreams and then work to make them come true. You have more power than you know.

Halloween 1998

i went to this man's house
when i was five years old
with my mom and i was
trick or treating and he was
having a party and so
all the people in the house
had their shoes off and he
came to the door and he
was like giving us candy
and his house smelled like feet
like his feet stank like a sewer
his house smelled like feet
and he only gave me one piece
of candy because i told him
his house smelled like feet

-Lil' Lady Skittles, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know this little Halloween story got some laughs from our readers, just because you say now what people won't usually say and you said then 'cause it was the truth — even if it did cost you some candy. Oh well, at least you got to write this sweet little humorous poem about a house that stank to death on Halloween.

When Did It All Start to Go Wrong

It all started for me when I was about eight years old and my brother was nine years old, and my two oldest brothers were sixteen. They used to make me and my brother fight with hella kids from the block and they made me and my brother fight with each other.

Then it went to fighting, getting expelled from school, then went to wanting to be like my big brothers, and then gang-banging and then went to stealin' cars, and then going to the Hall at the age of eleven years old, havin' girls, then went to holdin' and loaded guns, on the spot, running from Mama's car, not wanting' to go home, when she try to get us 'cause she was worrying so much about us that me and my brother Mike don't know, all we wanted to do was kick it on the block with the homies, and get into fights and go spend the night at the homies house, and just running the streets doing it big.

And now I'm sixteen, still running the streets, doing it big with my brother Mike still comin' up on 22's and shhh. Look where we are both in the Hall, but not for long.

RIP Big Joe

-Vee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is only the first of what we hope will be many pages about your life so far— which is already starting to feel like a book, full of drama and love and violence and loss. What a powerful story! The person missing in is your father. Was he involved in your life in any way? Was your mom doing all this alone?



Just Showing Some Love

I'm about to get out in like one or two months, but I'm going to camp so I don't know when is the last time I'm going to write for you guys anymore. But anyways, I can't wait to kick it on the outs. Wherever I go, I still got you in my heart and the old memories just kicking it and going stewie, ewwie oo. Lol! But until we kick it again keep, ya head up and keep it coo' for a while. Ya' folks.

-Gata

From The Beat: You know Deborah, this piece worries us because there's nothing in it about acknowledging your responsibility for being here. Quite the contrary, you seem hell-bent on returning to the same people and same actions that got you locked up to begin with. We hope you're not one of those foolish young girls who thinks that she can do the same as before only slicker. We know a lot of young people like that. They're almost all locked up!

Just A Fool In Love

When I was little I used to think love was for fools, for girls who wanted to be protected. Now I see clearly all the shhh I've been through wit' my man is love. We've been together a year and yeah, he's messed up. But that's love's ups and downs. Now I see that love is for fools. I guess I'm a fool in love.

-Acon

From The Beat: In one sense, everybody who is in love is a fool because love is like a blinding emotion. It makes us see what we want to see and ignore what we want to ignore. The one thing we know for sure is that nobody who's in love can "see clearly."

He was happy that I was pregnant with his child. He used to cry a lot in the night that nothing would happen to our child.

Halloween Story

My Halloween story is very, very, very sad and scary for the fact that it was during the time in 2001 with my friends, Shawntae, Mi Mi and my friend Rockell, Giovanni, and Muckie. We all had went to this abandoned house, not really sure where it was at. But it was very far, like in the middle of nowhere. The abandoned house had seven bedrooms and the windows was all boarded up. It smelt really, really bad, to the point where you could see lil' blood stains still on the wall...

The story of this house was that the last residents that lived in the house were a very big family, supposedly. The family had died in the house over a sickness, or whatever. So really the people that used to live there is still there. It's like when you enter the house late at night you can hear the voices. And you can hear the little kids playing in the hallways.

So during that day or whatever, my friend Shawntae, it was her 17th birthday party. She wanted to throw her party at that house. So she called a few of her friends which I named above. We were all drunk and high. So we were like forget it, let's go, so we went and threw the party. At the party a few people fell out. But all of a sudden, my friend Shawntae had to use the bathroom. So she went. Next thing or whatever, the next morning we saw her dead on the floor. We all ran out of the house. Of course we got her and took her to the hospital. The next thing you know she was dead.

After them days we never ever went to that house again. RIP Shawntae 1988-2001.

-Karen

From The Beat: This is more disturbing than an Halloween story. What really happened? What did Shawntae die from? Was there an autopsy? Is the haunted house still there? Have you ever been back?

Me And My Boyfriend

I got a boyfriend who cares 'bout me! I know hella cats tryna bring us down, but naw, we a "ride or die" couple! Were side by side 'till the casket drop. I love him, he loves me. Heads tryna say I don't know nothin' 'bout love, but I do.

I ain't got no family besides him and the homies. The streets is rough, but I don't walk 'em alone. I walk 'em wit' my alternative fam bam! We stick together just like glue! We stick together just us two! No other boys, just me and my I babbash... an' I'm his mammash.

-Acon

From The Beat: We need to say two things. First, we roll our eyes when we read that tired old phrase about "ride or die" (that we read all the time). We know you won't agree, but this slogan is for children and not for adults. If you're riding with your man till you drop, then you are still don't know love — love of yourself and respect for yourself, not to mention love and respect for God's creations. We're sorry to have to say that, but that's how we see it. Yes, you do know love, but it's not a mature love, not a responsible love, not an adult love. And the second thing we need to say is that we don't really like you to write on three subjects because when you write three pieces, you can only write a few sentences about each. We would MUCH rather see you choose just one topic and write as many details and explanations about it as possible.

Think

I wish I could tell you life was easy, and that it's perfect; but it's not. It has bumps and potholes in it. Being in juvenile hall is one of them. I know having fun is a big part of life, but there's limits to how much fun you have. Don't cross limits because occasionally they have their consequences. Take care of yourself.

-Giovanni

From The Beat: It's more than "occasionally" that crossing the line has consequences. In fact, everything we do — and everything we don't do — has its consequences. And you're right, it isn't easy. The truth is that all of us have to sacrifice some fun in the present to give us a more fun future. What do you hope to do in the future? How do you plan to get there from here?

Gameboy

When I was little, I used to think...
The whole world revolved around me.

I wish I could tell you... something,
but I don't really have anything to tell you.

One Halloween when I was little, my parents took me trick or treating in San Francisco. We were on the way to Robin Williams' house. When we got there, we found out that everyone there got free Gameboys. We got there too late. And when I found out I missed a Gameboy, I cried. So the next day my parents bought me one.

-Dmitriy

From The Beat: Each of these makes us want to know more details. So, in future, please just pick one of the topics to write about, not all three. Did you go to Robin Williams' door to learn the Gameboys were gone, or did somebody tell you before you got there? What was his house like?

Walk Proudly

What it do? Just thought I'd write to tell y'all keep ya' heads up. Life is full of adventures. Things get thrown your way. You can either catch 'em and throw 'em' back, or let things hit you. Just watch ya back and walk the streets proud.

-Acon

From The Beat: There's not enough information in this short piece for us to have a clear idea of what you mean. Can you give some examples of what it means to "catch 'em and throw 'em back," or "let things hit you." Which do you do?

RIP Julio Ronaldo

I remember when I was pregnant. Me and my boyfriend used to go shopping for the baby. I remember when he used to rub my tummy. When I went to the hospital the first time and they told me I was going to have a baby, I was so happy. I was the happiest person in the whole world.

He was happy that I was pregnant with his child. He used to cry a lot in the night that nothing would happen to our child. But I got to this day that I had a lot of pain in my lower back, and it was time to go to the hospital. I was about 27 weeks when I had my baby boy. He was born on July 12, '06 and died Aug 7, '06. He was with us for 15 days. The sad part was when I saw my child dead in my arms.

-Marisol

From The Beat: You have already experienced one of the hardest pains in the world to endure, the loss of a child. We read of so many mothers crying for their children lost to the streets, it is worth remembering that some mothers are crying for their children who passed from natural causes, and that the pain will never leave either one of them.

When I Was Little,

I used to think that I would never come to juvy. That I was too good to come here. I thought that I could never get in that much trouble to get arrested and come to Juvenile Hall. But I guess I thought wrong.

My mom was very sad that I got arrested and had to come serve time, for the second time. And I wonder what my girl is doing at this second. Me, I'm missing her so much. She might not care about what I'm thinking and doing. But I just hope that she's fine and she's not cheating on me. Or even flirting with other guys. I can't wait to get out and see her. It will be very, very sick.

-Mitchell

From The Beat: We know what you mean by "cheating" on you, but maybe there are more ways than one to cheat. Maybe, when you did whatever it was that gave the system the power to take you from her, you were cheating on her by putting something above her. What do you think?

Always And Forever In My Heart

Damn, another piece of my heart is gone. My homeboy which was like my brotha had to pass away for not knowing what he was doing! It hurts so much, the fact he was a piece of my heart. I remember me getting the bad news on my home-pass. I felt like a sugar cookie just falling apart. Why God had to take you this young and take you from me?

I remember you always trying to give me advice and I used to ignore you. Now I have the deepest emptiness in my heart. You wasn't just a homeboy. You was a piece of my heart. But you just left a lil' fast. We all go to the same spot. You and my brother will always be my ANGELS. And I promise you when I get out I'll visit your grave. Much love and respect. Will never forget you and things will never be the same without you. Always,

-Tiny

From The Beat: And so, Tiny, you now have another personal loss to deal with. We are so sorry. Why do so many tears have to be spilled in this war fought with children soldiers? Do believe "the cause" is worth the sacrifice?

Halloween Greed

I remember when I was little. I was probably in the 5th grade. It was Halloween. After school me, my brother, and some friends went to one of our friends house and stayed there till it got dark and we went trick or treating. When we got to the houses, there would be like a line and we would stay in the line with our masks off. We got our candy and went to the back of the line with out masks on to get more candy. It was fun.

-Richard

From The Beat: Didn't anyone ever recognize that they were giving the same people candy twice? Well, at least this is better than snatching bags from the little kids. You and your friends didn't do that, did you?

That's why when you
commit your first crime
they always put you on
probation, 'cause they
know you're gonna mess
up and come back here.

I Wish

I wish I could tell you
good stories instead of the
crimes that I have committed.

I wish I could tell you

I have a great family.

I wish I could tell you
that my family cares about me.

I wish I could tell you
what I seen.

I wish I could tell you
the troubles that I've been
through.

I wish I could tell you
the pain that I've been through.

I wish I could tell you
all the things that are tearing me
apart in the inside.

-Miguel

From The Beat: What good will you be to anyone if you are torn apart, Miguel? You are very smart, so you can see the forces that are tearing you apart: your knowledge of right and wrong, your family, your boys, your freedom, your life... We hope you can see your present situation as a fork in the road: you will have to choose which way to go. Look as far down each road as you can, and then make your choice.

Wishing Isn't Being...

I wish I could tell you

I will change

Become the person you always knew I would be

I wish I could tell you

That I'll never stray away from the right path

Live a good life without any more problems from the law

I wish I could tell you

I'm sorry for causing you so much pain

I wish I was

A better person

But I'm not

-Hector

From The Beat: Your very blunt ending makes us wonder how much you wish for what you say you wish for... Is it a reflection of honesty and resignation on your part, or boasting and pride? Do you truly wish to be "a better person," or only that you could TELL the "you" in this poem that you were one? What is preventing you from becoming the person you wish to be?

It's Bad

Hey what it do Beat? Me, I'm all right, just chillin'. I'm back in the hall for shakin' from my group home. And I got caught up in a stolo. So I'm stressing lightweight 'cause I've been to camp twice. They ain't trying to give me time here and I just chunked it. So I don't know what's gonna happen at court.

Last time I was here, they was trying to give me the "Y." I think I'm about to get that good ROP shot, but I ain't trippin'. What I am trippin' is that I got caught up with my brother, and he's probably going to camp. But he has a chance, so let's hope for the best.

All right then, I'm out. Keep your head up, and I'm out.

-Cheeks

From The Beat: So let's see if we've got this right, Cheeks. You were here before and they threatened to send you to the Y, but you were given a break and they sent you to a group home. So you "respected" that chance by running! Then you stole a car and ended up coming back here! When the people who have to decide your fate look at that pattern, what are they supposed to conclude? If you go to ROP, will you go hoping to learn some things about yourself and the world, or will you go thinking you already know all there is that you need to know? In other words, will you respect this opportunity?

Don't Ask

I can't come up with anything, better luck next time.

-Jerod

From The Beat: Luck has nothing to do with it!

Sometimes, I think
back, and I want to
do all the things that
I thought when I was
a little girl.

I Wish I Could Tell You . . .

The story of when I got caught. Well we decided to go tag on a wall. We went to South City and a bum got too close to us from behind. We told him that he was too close. So when I told him that, he got really close. If he would've got any closer, he would've got hit. So he passed through us.

My friend mumbled, "You get killed for things like that." He thought we had a gun.

The bum said, "Do you want to see mine?" thinking he had a gun. He went on and saw a cop up the street. He said that there were five to six people with guns. That was a lie.

So we go up to where we were going to tag. A train passed by so we had to hide. When the train passed by we hopped out. We really didn't hear anything, so we jumped and went to go tag. Cops came out with their guns drawn thinking we had guns.

-Con

From The Beat: When you are tagging, are you thinking of creating something beautiful, or just leaving your mark, your "footprints on the sands of time...?" When guns are drawn, bad things can happen. If expressing your art is what you're about, then we hope you investigate the various legal ways you can do it. If something else is driving you, can you explain it to us?

When I Was Little . . .

When I was a little girl, I used to think a lot of fun things about my future, or the things that I wanted to do when I grew up. But I never thought like to be in jail. And I never thought that some day I could hurt my family. I never thought about using drugs and to be a gangster. I never thought that I could end up in jail because the drugs.

I used to think a lot of things but I never thought about all the things that I have done. Sometimes, I think back, and I want to do all the things that I thought when I was a little girl. And I don't want to hurt my family like I'm doing it now, because it hurts me when I see my family like that. And I want to change my life.

-Jessica

From The Beat: You know, Jessica, the fact that you want to change the things you've done that hurt your family tells us that you are growing up. So isn't it funny that, even though you wish you could go back to that innocent time of childhood before the sorrow and regrets began, you can be thankful that you are seeing the world through more responsible, more mature eyes and are therefore more able to deal with the world in a more responsible, more mature way. You don't want to be a child again, you want to be an adult.

Life

I wish I could tell you... I wish I could tell you that life is easy. But life for a juvenile isn't easy. You have tons of rules you have to obey, things you have to do, but that ain't easy. When you walk around at night you always have to watch your back for the cops because just walking around late at night can get you in trouble, just for a curfew violation and get brought back to the hall.

As a juvenile, you can't have freedom as much as you used to have before you got locked up. The smallest crime you commit, even if you don't think it's that bad, can get you locked up. And when you get locked up you get put on probation. What does that do to your life? It messes your whole life over. That's why when you commit your first crime they always put you on probation, 'cause they know you're gonna mess up and come back here.

They let you go, lock you up, and keep doing it 'till they get sick of you. And when they get sick of you, they take all your past crimes and violations, add them up and screw you over. But instead what you should do is when you get released, finish your program and get off probation. It will make your whole life easier. Or else a bad consequence is out there waiting for you.

-Looney

From The Beat: Right, Looney! In other words, you better get sick of them before they get sick of you. It is hard to keep the rules and regulations, and especially to follow all the conditions of probation. But it is a test you can pass if you really want to, as hard as it is. Good for you for seeing that.

Lo Que Quiero

Quisiera tiempo para jugar porque extraño la libertad. Quisiera estar afuera de todo esto. Quiero estudiar, jugar y ser alguien en la vida para ser alguien el día de mañana. Andar en las calles solo aprendemos malas cosas.

From The Beat: Todas estas cosas tú las puedes realizar siempre y cuando te pongas las pilas. Comienza educandote. Una buena educación abre muchas puertas en la vida.

What I Want

I would like time to play because I miss my freedom. I would like to be away from all this. I want to study, play, and be someone in life so I can be someone when tomorrow comes. All we learn from being out on the streets are bad things.

-Melsar B1

From The Beat: You can always realize all these things when you step on it. Start educating yourself. A good education opens many doors in life.

Cambiar Por Mi Niña

Si me dieran dos horas de libertad, fuera a ver a mi hija para jugar con ella y luego pasaría con mis homies. Pero por lo que más quiero salir es por mi hija.

Me gustaría salir de aquí para reunirme con mi familia. Me gustaría cambiar mi vida porque no le quisiera dar un mal ejemplo a mi hija. No me gustaría que fuera como otras niñas que andan en las calles. Les escribo más la semana que viene.

From The Beat: Que bien que estas pensando con tu cabeza no con tu piez. Es verdad sino le pones un stop a esta vida, tu hija puede que continúe los pasos tuyos. A nadie le gustaria ver eso. Ella necesita a un padre que le de buenos ejemplos y le demuestre lo que realmente es un hogar. Lo primero que tienes que hacer es alejarte de las malas influencias que te puedan perjudicar en tu vida. ¿Crees que le puedes ofrecer esto?

Change For My Daughter

If they were to give me two hours of freedom, I would go see my daughter so I could go play with her and then spend time with my homies, but what I want to get out of here the most is for my daughter.

I would like to get out of here so I could be reunited with my family. I would like to change my life because I would not like to give a bad example to my daughter. I don't want her to be like other girls who are out on the streets. I'll write to y'all more next week.

-Smiley B2

From The Beat: That's very good that you are thinking with your head and not with your feet. It's true; if you don't put a stop to this life, your daughter could end up following in your footsteps. No one would like to see that. She needs a father to give her good examples and show her what a home really is. The first thing that you have to do is distance yourself from the bad influences that could put your life at risk. Do you believe that you can offer her this?

Mis Pensamientos

Si tubiera esa oportunidad me hiría donde mi novia y hacer lo que no puedo hacer aquí. Corriera hasta que no pueda correr más.

Mi lugar favorito es un parque con agua porque es tranquilo con aire puro y sin ruido. También un gym porque ahí conozco a algunas personas.

Lo que más extraño de mi niñez es cuando la familia se reunía para comer, jugar juegos, hablar, y cuando nos íbamos a bañarnos a la playa.

Lo que me gustaria tener otra vez es un carro de juguete que tenía control remoto el cual se me cayó en el agua.

From The Beat: Tienes bonitos lugares donde pasarla bien. No hay ningún lugar mejor que los lugares que traen paz y tranquilidad a nuestras vidas. Ver a la familia reunida es un don que todos deseáramos ver. ¿Sabes porque ahora no puedes disfrutar de esas reuniones?

My Thoughts

If I had this opportunity, I would go to where my girlfriend is and do what I cannot do here. I would run until I couldn't run anymore.

My favorite place is a park with water because it is calm with pure air and without noise. Also, a gym because I would know some people there.

What I miss the most from my childhood is when the family would get together to eat, play games, talk, and when we go swim at the beach.

What I would like to have again is a toy car that had a remote control, which ended up falling in the water.

-Luis B2

From The Beat: You have nice places where you can have a good time. There are no better places than the places that bring us peace and tranquility to our lives. Seeing our family reunited is a gift that we all wish we could see. Do you know why you now can't enjoy these reunions.

SANTA CRUZ

Last Time From The Hall

What's up Beat? This is my last time writing to you from the hall. I'm leaving for a one year program in Stockton. But I'm still going to write to you from the outs. I will see you all on the outs. So keep your heads up - all the halls.

-Rene'

From The Beat: We will miss you Rene'. And we look forward to hearing from you. Thanks for your faithful writing.

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I could tell you how I feel, but you've probably heard it already. How much I regret having to come here. I wish I could turn back the hands of time and do everything right, but that's impossible. But that's how I really feel.

-E

From The Beat: You have told us and we appreciate it, and we believe you.

Secrets

Everybody's got secrets, but you shouldn't try to hide them. They're putting on masks, whispering behind your back. I have a good memory and I don't forget people's dirty secrets. What you do in the past you can't change, so don't try to lie about it.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Remind us not to tell you any of our secrets.

A Far from Boring Halloween Story

Last year on Halloween I thought it was going to be boring. Then some homies called to ask if I wanted to go trick or treating. I did go, but before we started, we stopped at Long's. I thought we were gonna get a bottle or something. But those guys got cartons of eggs and then we divided them up between ourselves.

We parked the car on some street and started walking and getting candy. We met a few girls. They were wearing some mini-mini skirts. They looked bombing. So they walked with us. People who didn't give us candy got their houses egged.

We walked up to one guy's house. He was dressed like a pimp and thought he was all bad. He started hitting on the girls and talking crap. So we jacked all his candy, egged his house with most of the eggs, and ran.

-Jose

From The Beat: Hey, that kind of fun hurts other people. And that's not funny.

A Halloween Story

I remember one Halloween when I went with my cousins and a couple of friends - just going to houses for treats. But we came across this house where this girl lived that my cousin didn't like. We knocked and no one answered, so all of us guys went in and started trashing everything we found. We took all kinds of crap and left to my cousin's house. So, that's one of the Halloweens I remember.

-A trashy night

From The Beat: What a nasty story. Did anyone have the decency to apologize, or to return the stolen goods? If not, you should.

I Wish I Could Tell You . . .

I wish I could tell you how many times I lied and cheated on you. Truth is, I can't keep track. I found somebody better than you, somebody faithful, somebody I love to death, somebody that cares. Since you've been gone, things got better for me, at least.

(to be continued...)

-Anonymous

From The Beat: Sounds like a lot of lying and cheating going on, all over the place. We hope you get this sorted out.

People who didn't give us candy got their houses egged.

True Wishes

What's up with it Beat this is Derrick ya' know DJ. I wish I could tell my girlfriend Shanice I miss you. I wanted you not to go to a group home. I wish you were going to be out with me next week. You know when you get your home visit come to the house because I want to see you. Be strong.

-Derrick

From The Beat: We hope the two of you are reunited soon! Good luck, and stay strong yourself.

People

When I talk to people,
I talk without thinking and if you
Come at me wrong I talk without
Blinking I stand tall
Never fall and I'm a boss at what I do.

-It'll Do

From The Beat: We're all the boss of our own words - so do think before you talk!

When I Was Little

When I was a little, I used to think that Happy Meals From McDonalds and Taco Bell were the greatest thing to eat, whenever, rain or shine. But we always reserve one on every Friday night. When my sister and I would go to my Grandparents on the weekend. I sure wish I had one now. I would be all over it like white on rice.

-Steven

From The Beat: How do you deal with your food cravings in the hall? It's such a common thing we read about in The Beat - missing your favorite foods. First freedom, then fries.

When I Was Little

When I was little I used to be cool and I was not focused on money and the streets because I was square back when I was playing sports and all that good stuff.

When I was little I used to be a good boy when I was going to Foster Middle School because all I was focused on was basketball and school because that's what I was doing until I started smoking and going to parties and messing with girls, but that ain't going stop me from eating because I got to eat. But at the same time I'm still do something positive in my childhood like playing sports again. Beat I'm out so be easy.

-Baby T

From The Beat: It's hard to balance the good things like sports and the thrill of drugs and parties. We hope you don't fall into the trap of thinking that doing good means you're a square, and squares are bad. Be yourself, be free

Power of the Pen

Ninjas keep my name up in
They mouth but never fighting me,
And I never get a word up out my
Mouth unless they biting me,
But I'm a savage I do damage
My flow puts holes up in your brain,
Leaves you crippled when walking
And even ninpin' with a cane.

-It'll Do

From The Beat: You recognize the power of words, but we hope you can take it to the next level by using words to strengthen yourself without weakening the next man. Keep writing and leave the hating alone.

My Wish

What's up with it Beat this is Derrick ya' know DJ. I wish I could tell my baby mama I miss her and I love her. I don't need to even say it. She know how I feel about her. I know she miss me too. We share strong love for each other. I will love my baby mama Janeiya forever.

-Derrick

From The Beat: We hope your baby and her momma are safe and warm without you. Take good care of your family, and the only, yes ONLY, way you can do this is by staying free.

I Wish I Was Out

i wish i could tell you how
i'm'a be when i get out
shhh when i get out
i'm'a be kickin' it with my fam-fam
and just kick it with them, you know
when i'm out and off home supe' and probation
then i'm'a blow and then go
see what up on the block
until the next beat, i'm gone

-Lil' Ron

From The Beat: Your head's trying to give you a good plan, but your heart just wants to go stand on the block. Nah, your plan's not strong enough. As soon as you get frustrated at home, with this plan in the back of your mind, you'll blow, and get gone. You've got to want what's right with all your might, to hold on!

Ghosts!

When I was little, I used to think: that there was a ghost in my basement.
I wish I would tell you: that I went to a graveyard and saw six ghosts.

-Sean

From The Beat: Do you think ghosts are real? Some of us do, and some of us don't. Tell us about you and what made you t hink there was a ghost in your basement!

Mad, Bad and Glad

i remember that last halloween
when i went trick-or-treat'ing
i was not getting a lot of candy
so i got mad
and went to taking other people's bags
around the neighborhood
and then after that
i went to a halloween party
and then i got glad

-Damarié

From The Beat: No diss, but that mentality is what led to this — your being incarcerated on Halloween this year. Maybe you've hit the age where you should skip trick-or-treat'ing and just go to the party that made you glad — 'cause you had too many other youngsters spending Halloween feeling sad. Bad karma, man.

I Wish I Was Home

i wish i could tell you how much
i miss all of you guys at home
i wish i could tell you how much i love you
and i wish i was able to be at home
with my little brother and with my mom
and with my dad and with my big brother
and i wish i could tell you when
i am going to get released out the hall man

-Martin

From The Beat: We wish you could tell us what you'll do differently this time when you get released to go back to your family. Will you stay off the spot? Will you stop ditching classes at school? What will you do differently so you can stay home and stay free? Go back to the same

Love You

I wanna just give a big shout out to my little patna up in 150. I just want to let you know yo' patna ain't forgot about you, and I'm goin' to write you when I get out, which should be soon. Just keep your head up and try not to let it all get to you. I love you, brah!

-Shadie Bo

From The Beat: Our pages are not really for personal communication of any sort, but since you're getting out soon, and you say little more to Lil' Man than to keep his morale up in a difficult situation, it's okay this time. Next time teach something positive in your piece, 'cause this is no place to be.

I Wish I Could Tell You Why

i wish i could tell you why i'm in jail
i wish i could tell you why i do the things i do
i wish i could tell you why i get down
i wish i could tell you why i go to sideshows
i wish i could tell you why i go to parties
i wish i could tell you why i fight
i wish i could tell you why i bang
i don't know

-Lil' Doug

From The Beat: We suggest you take each line of this poem and make it the title of a whole piece. But do them in this order: sideshows, parties, fighting, getting down, things i do, i'm in jail. And you don't even have to be able to summarize why you do it, 'cause just as here, it begins to become clear as you write.

Saying a Lil' Something

I thought I never see the day that I would be getting out. It's been a long time since I seen the streets, but I'm gon' be back where I belong — getting money, doing it big to neck, because the whole time I been here my so-called patnas only wrote me one letter. So when I get out and see them, they gon' know what's up, brah. Man, I ain't trying to hear it! Love all that, love you — but don't let love mess up your vision. How much love did your loved one have when you was broke or doing time in prison?

-Fat Boy

From The Beat: In your other piece this week, you said you learned a lot on max, but you must have been listening to the ones who won't even get another chance to come back and still think they're a quality act! Here you sound like you didn't learn a thing — and it makes us angry because we know how you'll feel when you're back here again. We've seen it way too often. Man, don't you understand we're not threatening you but trying to help you see through a game that uses you up till you lose all you've got: your life or your freedom! That's not love out there, it's just feel good while you're out in the 'hood sharing the delusion that you're winning when you're really losing. Wake up!

I Wish I Was Out

I wish I was out with my baby right about now,
This shhh is getting me mad as hell
but I am gon' go home to her.
She don't know I am coming home
She got me hehlla shhh. I miss my girl and she misses me,

I will not come back to this mutha flower
You feel me my name is Stuwie and I go
Hard ninjas got love for me
I wish I was home making love to my girl right now
you feel me. I got to go back to my room.
Stuwie is out of here.

I'm not coming back here.

Eff that stuff
one love.

-Stuwie

From The Beat: We hear that you don't want to come back, but we don't hear your plan for how you're gonna make that happen. Aside from loving your lady, what is your plan? No plan equals probation violation and no lady to love.

When I Get Out

Man I can't wait to get out here. This juvenile hall shhh ain't the business. I need to be out getting money man. Because me being in the hall means I ain't got no money. For everybody that's reading this if you ain't on money when you get out get on it fast. Because that's what my squad is all about, you feel me.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: We feel you. We all need money. But we want to know what you need your money for. To feed your family — or for street fame? Make sure you chase the right money, for the right reasons.

My Life

my life scandalous
crimes and down-side faces
while youngstas facing these cases
about that mission
trying to get a dollar
while these scan'lous bops
trying to holler
they want that dough
but i don't give ends to show
i give ends to blow
i got that ro' trying to bo'
while surviving in the "o"
but the "o" ain't nothing
'cause now it's filled wit' suckas and bops
who thugging wit' out rubbers
my life is crazy you see
like riding a roller coaster trying to be me
'cause its ups and down
wit' crooked-side frowns
but to you dudes out there
who want stress and troubles
it's good 'cause you ain't 'bout
what you be talking 'bout

-P-Stank

From The Beat: There's way too much bragging in this piece that takes away from the critical points you're trying to make about the streets. It's like you're still too caught up in the role you play out there day to day to stop and think about what you really have to say besides claiming to be all that and a bag of chips. Honestly, the time has come for you to quit and go legit or the stress and troubles will soon be all you can get.

GED and a Job

What's up, Beat? How's life been treating you? This is Louis from Hayward, California, United States of America — and I can't wait to get out! So I can get my GED and get a job somewhere in the San Francisco Bay Area, California, and support myself legally with my own money.

-Louis

From The Beat: Right on. But you can work on your GED here and now, too. Then when you get out, you'll be that much closer to passing the test. And that should help you find a job, too.

I Thought It Was Funny

When I was little, I always wanted to play wit' guns and grenades. I just wanted to blow stuff up!

This one time I was looking at a sleeping cat, and I put a firecracker pack next to it, then lit the whole pack. It had a long stem, so I sat back and watched as it blew off one of its ears. Then it ran off.

This other time, I put an M-thousand on someone's doorstep and rung their doorbell. The stem was long, so it took time. When a little boy opened the door, it blew up — and he screamed!

This other time, I let my dog dookie on this porch. The lady came out and stepped in it with her bare feet!

-Roz Gold

From The Beat: And that mentality has taken you far — cross-town to living as a juvenile behind bars. Maybe seeing other creatures and people in terror, discomfort, degradation and pain makes you forget your own, but dealing with your own issues is the only way you'll have the last laugh in life. On the real, it's your own life you're blowing up and dragging through dookie. Think about.

Love For Mom

I wish I could tell you how much I love you mom. I know I've said some hurtful things to you and made you cry. I'm really sorry, I know you might say that I always apologize and then keep bein' rude to you. I really love you you've always been here for me. Love you!

-Cynthia

From The Beat: You've got to tell it right to her. Good parents always forgive. But you have to keep your promises or she won't be able to trust you forever.

My Halloween Nights

What I like first about Halloween is all the candy you get when you knock on all the doors and show them your bag and say, "Trick or treat!"

And you could stay up late and walk around your hood and kick it with your homeboys. Sometimes I would get two pillow cases full, or a lot more, and we would stay out goin' to houses until all the houses lights turned off.

Then we would still go places and kick it! — I can't believe I'm locked up for Halloween.

-Anthony

From The Beat: It sounds like a whole lot of fun and something you wouldn't want to miss. The best thing you can do now is teach yourself a lesson by this. If by this you think we mean you need to just get slicker, then you're thinking's just getting sicker — 'cause that route will just bring you back here quicker.

My Last Bent From Jail

What's up, Beat? Well, I got that good news that every inmate wants: I'm going home! Well, not really home — but it's just like it.

I'm really going to miss all my folks in max, because that's where I came from. It's like I learned a whole lot of stuff from some people. I've been here for a minute now, so it's time for me to go home to a better place.

For some reason, I feel like this place has made me who I am today. Jail can either make you or break you, and it made me a man somehow that will stand up for himself. They say I will be out next week. So I'm guessing this will be my last Beat from jail. So to all my people in jail, there's always hope. One love

-Fatboy

From The Beat: It's always good to get the news that you'll be out soon. Whether or not you come back will depend on you, and maybe on what you learned in here and whom you learned it from. If you mean you think you earned stripes and got laced on how to live the criminal life, you're just headed for more struggle and strife, and you may end up back on max facing life. We hope you learned that the risks you were taking out there are not worth the price, and it's time to start living more like a square and do right.

Strange Love

I wish I could tell you why I love this life style that I love to live, but sometimes I don't even know why I do. Besides the drugs and jainas, there is something in my blood that just loves gangbanging!

Whenever there is a fight, my heart beats faster, and something in me wants to make my enemies suffer — it's like I can't help it! I just love the lifestyle, even though I know it will just lead me to be six feet under or locked up.

And even if I try to do right, I always end up doing wrong. I guess I'm just crazy for the banging life. Keep your chest out, chin up! Alrato.

-Dimples

From The Beat: Sorry, we can't list RIP's unless you write a piece about the person and your relationship to him/her. Then it can be the title. As for your love of gangbanging, it is a twisted way to make yourself feel better — by making your enemies suffer. It's more than twisted, it's actually a boomerang, 'cause you end up, just as you say, making yourself suffer, too. Maybe you're an adrenaline junkie fiending for drama? Whatever, we hope you see it's time to change before it's too late. We've seen too many buried and put away for life. Think about your mom and family.

when i was little

i used to think i was never going to get a girlfriend — and i did

-Francisco

From The Beat: Seems like a strange thing for a little one to worry about, but we're glad you know better now.

I Love Halloween

What I love about Halloween is that at night, I walk down the street and knock on people's doors and ask for candy. If they don't give me some candy, I will take it from them and run like the police was after me!

But on the good side, I like to watch the little kids get their candy — for I could take their candy from them! When I was little boy, I always grew up looking at my sister killing people. So that's what I do now.

-Halloween Candy Fiend

From The Beat: We sure hope by "killing" you mean stealing candy on Halloween and not its literal definition. With that said, take a look at where you are and think about where your attitude is taking you. It is cool to get candy on Halloween, and even cool to take some (not all) if a house refuses you — 'cause that's part of the trick-or-treat of it all. But stealing from kids, man, it's just so weak to steal candy from a baby. Think it over next year.

Rip List

-P-Stank

From The Beat: Sorry we had to cut your RIP list (and your "Free" list), but we've tried to explain that since someone once used a list to threaten enemies with death, rather than show love and respect to friends, we can't print lists. If you want to write a piece about a RIP friend, tell us about him and your relationship to him, and you can put RIP Whomever as its title.

It's Not Cool

lock up is not cool
havin' fights
get money and get caught
by the staff
get put on a program
go to court
get washed
go to c y a
have fights
get max'd out
hella ninjas hitting on me

-Stunna Boy

From The Beat: Phew! You tell it true, 'cause everything you say about your experience of lock up is not cool! So now what you gonna do? Go back to school? Get a job? Or thug and mob till you get caught up again and maybe get sent to the pen? It's your choice, and we hope you're ready to get real with it. Quit, go legit.

Scary Halloween Stories

I had a lot of scary Halloween stories when I was little. They were all about dead people. These dead people used to come into my house and try to kill me! And I always would try to away.

Me and my family used to get in a car drive around the block. I would look out my window, and I would see the people right on us, runnin' in out of nowhere! A big ol' man hit my car, and we was about to be killed, when I'd suddenly wake up! It was just a story I'd heard, but then I started having bad dreams when I was young.

-Kash Money

From The Beat: It sounds like a bad dream from the get-go. Why do we like scary stories so much, when so many of us are subject to bad dreams that have us wake up sweating even if we don't scream? Did you know you can practice facing the monsters in your dreams? First you learn to turn and fight. Then you learn to turn, fight and win. Then you learn to turn and realize you don't even have to fight, 'cause you it's your dream and in it you can give the monster what he really wants and needs — then he becomes your friend and guardian, in sleep and awake, too.

RIP Bo

Q-vo Beat and Beat readers! Thhis the homeboy, Lil' Moco. I just want to say: Rest In Peace to my homey Baby Bo!

It's been several long years (on October nineteenth) since that sucka took you away from this earth. And even though life goes on, I ain't forgotten about you. I couldn't of help you that night, but it's still all good 'cause I know one day that I'll be joining you, probably sooner than later. It's like that in the 'hood sometimes. Much love.

-Lil' Moco

From The Beat: You've still got The Beat twisted, putting in all those calls for your side. And you're talking about dying as if it's a good thing. How did you let your mind get so out of pocket! We totally respect your love for your lost homie, but that has nothing to do with continuing the life style that got him killed! At some point you'll have to recognize that as long as you support this war, you're as responsible for the death of loved ones as so-called enemies.

Asian Gang History, Part 2

There was a piece on the Tong Society a couple of weeks ago in The Beat. I wonder who wrote that piece, because it seemed to me it was disrespectful. I think whoever wrote that, did it as a joke, too — because we like to keep our business to a down-low.

We are still out there, yes. That's true. We do what we do. But writing about it in The Beat was out of pocket. Our family and our society has been around since the 1930's. It's old and traditional. And yes we are located in more than ten major cities around the world.

-Mien

From the Beat: The piece to which you refer, spilled no secrets. As you point out, the Tong Society has been around a long time. We felt it was more a statement of pride in being a part of that fellowship, a pride which you clearly share. However, we urge you to find a source of pride and identity outside membership in an international crime syndicate — like get your diploma or GED and a legal job. And when you're married with children, don't confuse family with a mob.

Eat At Al's

When I get out I'm going straight to Al's and get an Al's special with pancakes and bacon. And I'm gonna get a bacon, egg, and cheese sandwich. Then I'm gonna go to the house and call some girl. She might come through or I might go to her house.

-Jason

From The Beat: Maybe you should invite that girl with you to Al's for the delicious meal!

Earth

When I was little I used to think that there was only one planet.

-Michael

From The Beat: How does it change your perspective to know we earthlings aren't "it"? There so much out there, and we're so small!

No Jail

I wish I could tell you to stay outta jail but I can't tell you, cause I'm in here.

-Young Detainee

From The Beat: On the one hand, you're right because, as they say, you've gotta walk it like you talk it. On the other hand, you know from experience that staying out of jail is good advice. Now you just have to take your own.

Wish I Could

i wish i could tell you
when i'm going to get out of here
hopefully it's soon because
i'm not trying to be here forever
i wish i could tell you
how long i'm going to get
sentenced for
all right beat
late
see y'all next week

-Tonic

From The Beat: Those are natural thoughts and feelings to have in your situation, but you need to put some thought into what keeps bringing you to lock up so that you can break the cycle. Often it starts with stopping something or other way before whatever you get caught up for. You feel?

These Cold Streets

where i'm from
you have to fight
to survive
you have also lost
a lot of family members
in these cold streets

-Twan

From The Beat: Survival would be increased if the fighting ceased. You can't change where you're from, but you can change the level at which you take action. Rise above the strife in order to survive. Quit the mob, get an education and a job.

Stop While You Still Have Time

When I was little I used to think that going to jail was fun, but now I know that it ain't coo' — because I have been in jail since 2004, and I have not been happy ever since I first came to jail.

If I could go back in time, I would not have done the things that I have done. To all my ninjas in the Hall, be coo' — man, get out! They got to let you go one day.

-Lil' Jacob

From The Beat: You can't change what you've already done, but you can change what you do after they release you. If you haven't been sentenced to life, yeah, they will have to let you go one day — but the key is doing what you need to do (and not doing what you need not to do) to insure you never come back.

Too Much

too much thinking
completely shut down my brain
exhausted from the effort
of taking my GED test earlier today

-Ally Bo

From The Beat: Yes, you may be excused from producing eloquent poetry or writing a tight rap today. In fact, we want to congratulate you on the effort you put into that endeavor.

Scary Halloween

The scariest Halloween was when my cousin died right in front of me in Sobrante. When I got there he was saying his last regrets to all his patnas and I ran and grabbed him. He said nothing, his eyes rolled in the back of his head and he died. I had blood on my shirt and hands I started to cry and that was that. RIP Dre

-Joslyn

From The Beat: That is pretty much the scariest and most horrible Halloween we can imagine. It's supposed to be a fun night, but everyone goes out and whoops it up, causing trouble. This time, your cousin and all his family paid a terrible price. We're so sorry.

What I Use To Think

when i was little i used to think i would never be in these type of situations when i got this age i used to think that i would grow up to be a "L7" be a doctor makin' over a hundred thousand a year no kids, no child support, and a one big bedroom condo

-Mackey

From The Beat: Are you saying you're already a father? Otherwise, there's no reason you can't still pursue your dream. Even if it's not medical school, you could still get a professional degree that opens doors to the steady money you dream of. You just have to live that "L7" life, get your education, and work hard for a better future. Then one day, sit back and count your money.

Halloween

From what I can remember, the day of Halloween this past year, I had a wart — so I didn't do much. But my pop's hit my phone early that day, talkin' 'bout a bottle on Henn. So he bought a bottle of Hennessy, and by some time between four and six o'clock, I was drunk!

So time went by, and my sister cooked a Halloween dinner. So I woke up again at 'bout eight, but I was still drunk — so I didn't eat. And then the worst thing that could ever happen, happened! My sister asked me to walk my lil' sister around the block. So I did, still hella high and smoking hella Newport.

Then I ended my night with this girl at the house. She was wearing a fake Lil' Kim wig fo' Halloween — and I sho' wasn't feelin' that!

-Tank

From The Beat: You do know how to tell a funny story, but somehow it's all pretty sad, especially the part where your dad gets you drunk? What's that about? So you can miss your sister's Halloween dinner and smoke 'Ports while you're out with your little sister — who will always remember trick-treat'ing with you? And judging from a couple of words we changed, you were feeling Lil' Kim enough. On the real though, it's tough when you've got to be more mature than your own father if you want a better life.

Miss All My Ninjas

i wish i could tell you how much i miss all my ninjas from my ninjas on the block to the ones who ain't here no more i miss the hell out of them from just kickin it and getting money to going out and keeping it lit that stuff be so much fun when you and all yo' ninjas be out havin' fun so don't ever forget yo' ninjas or people who care about you

-Big Sterl

From The Beat: Of course you do, but you need to see that this time in the Hall is part of that time on the outs gettin' money or whatever. And when you realize this is part of that, it's not as much fun as your memories throw up at you — 'cause no one finds this place fun for long. And when you count the deaths of those that are gone as part of it, well, wouldn't you rather they were still living? Don't blame the player, blame the game.

Went Left, Not Right

When I was little I used to think I was gon' grow up and be playin' professional sports, but now it's all just a dream to me. I was on the path to a better life, but instead of making a right turn, I went left. And now there's a little halt on my life. But hey, what can I do? There ain't no time portal that can take me back to when I first made that wrong turn. So now I gotta just live my life for dis time period time with what God gave me. But anyway, that was what I used to think when I was a little boy.

-Barty

From The Beat: It seems like everyone growing up in the ghetto dreams of becoming a professional athlete or a rap star, because those are the images of success that look like they grew tall from roots in the ghetto. In truth there are so many other routes to success, once you realize it's not about fame but economic security with a loving family of children you're raising up right. So use this time to work with your mind, and when you get released have your degree and the job training you need.

What People Think

When I was little, people used to tell me I was hella bad and I was gonna go to juvenile hall. I was always like, "Hell naw I ain't!" But look what happened — I been to the Hall six times, and now I'm at Camp!

I be thinking hella stuff now. I snatched my partna's girl, and he loves her! I wonder what he's thinking about me right now. Anyways, I ain't worried 'bout him! But I been at Camp for two months, and my PO said I should be out now.

-Roland

From the Beat: What happened to this guy being your friend? Do you think it would be cool if he stole your girl? Just something to think about. Remember though, there is no reason to instigate. Do your own thing and forget the haters.

To watch a friend die . . .

I watched my friend Willy get shot right in front of me. I couldn't do anything but tell him to hold on.

Tyisha

From The Beat: How did that experience change you? We know it made you sad and angry, but was there any positive change? That's what Willy would have wanted: something positive to come out of the tragedy of his death.

The Best Child

when i was little
i used to think
that i was the best child
student, son, boyfriend, grandson
i used to be a great child
but now i'm in this piece of spit place

-Innocent

From The Beat: You've told us before that you're innocent in this specific case. We're not saying you're being here is fair, but what did you do to put yourself in the way of this trouble that caught you up? Give us a bigger picture. How'd you go from that great child to a juvenile detainee? And what will you do about it?

On the Edge of Love

As light as a feather's whisper
In an overcrowded room
You walked into my life
Not a precious moment too soon.
Like a shadow on an evening wall
Creeping across the floor
You came into my life
Knowing not what was in store
The electricity that I felt
When you reached to touch my skin
Such a scary feeling
Like we had already been good friends
The comfortable situation
As we laughed and talked and loved
Standing among the excitement
On the edge of love
Dedicated to that special one

-No Luck

From The Beat: Sounds like you truly are on that edge of love. What do you think is on the other side, and what's the scariest part of the feeling? Do you think your "special someone" is scared too? Do you think this is a relationship which will help you be stronger both in and out of the Hall?

I Want To Tell You

i wish i could tell you
why is the streets talkin'
but these ninjas ain't loyal
i wish i could tell you
why is it funk out there in the streets
every day of the week
i wish i could tell you
why people hating in these streets
i wish i could tell you
why some women out there
passing h i v like they don't care
i wish i could tell you
why someone had to snitch on me
i wish i could tell you
i was still out there living my life free
i wish i could tell you
why this had to happen to me

-Young Rick

From The Beat: You were taught to be true to the game, but the game isn't true to those who playin' it true. And it's not just snitches who not cool, it's the nature of the game to play a player for a fool. The only way to stay free, is free yourself from the street mentality, 'cause the game swallows every player in the end — it's just reality. It lets you win for a year and a day, but there are as many ways to lose as there are players that choose to continue to play after they're old enough to make money some other way.

I Wish

i wish i could tell you
that i have committed crimes
in my past
but i'm innocent
in this specific case
i wish i could tell you
that the people
who you have in custody
in my case are innocent

-No Name

From The Beat: Surely you have told your lawyer that you're innocent, and we think you're saying those arrested with you are innocent, too. How did you get into this mess in the first place?

Halloween Candy

don't really have a
halloween story
all i do is throw candy

-No Name

From The Beat: At whom? Or what?

That Decision

I wish I could tell you why I made the stupid decision that got me in here, but I can't it just happened.

-Figuring it out

From The Beat: Everyone makes stupid decisions. It's just a good idea to learn your lesson and not make the same stupid decision twice.

In Jail For

i wish i could tell you about how
i feel about a person that you like so much
and you would stay in jail for them
and do anything for them
and would love to see them happy

-Jay

From The Beat: Unconditional love is sweet, but unrequited love feels like defeat when you realize you're being used by someone who cares so little for you that they'd let you do their time while they stay out risking their freedom doing more crime.

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I could tell you why is the streets talkin' and these ninjas ain't loyal. I wish I could tell you why is funk out there in the streets.

I wish I could tell you why people hating in these streets.

I wish I could tell you why some the women out there passing HIV.

I wish I could tell you why people snitching on me.

I wish I could tell you why people get they life revoke.

I'm out,

-Young Rick

From The Beat: Yes indeed there is no telling why others do what they do, but can you tell us why you talk or don't talk? Why you loyal, or not? Why there is funk and hating on the street? Why people are ill, selfish and just don't care? Why one dies and the others live long and healthy lives?

When I was little, I used to think...

That life would be easy and fair, now I think otherwise because I'm locked up in juvenile hall.

-Locked

From The Beat: life isn't easy and it isn't fair, and event less easy and less fair for some than others. But you've got to pick yourself up, dust yourself off, and do what you can with the cards you've been dealt. Many people have overcome great adversity, but you have to recognize your greatness before you can do that. Try not to get down on yourself too much.

First HV

What up, Beat! This is Dreamer from Hayward comin' at you from Camp. Last weekend I had my first home visit.

When I first got here the people that went home always used to say it was lovely out there, and I used to say, "Lovely? That sounds hella gay!" But I found out that lovely is the perfect word.

And when I came back here and saw the same faces, it felt like the whole thing was just a dream — but I can't wait till my next one!

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Such much depends on your dreams. They determine how you see the world and who you want to be. Freedom was pretty much invisible to you, nothing you'd dream about till you got locked up and couldn't get out. Now let a dream of freedom transform your behaviors and how you see them.

Waiting for my PO to change . . .

I been waiting for 10 days now. I already went to court. Now I'm just waiting! I feel like they're playing me! Like they suppose to change my PO. but they're making me wait for I don't know how long? Hopefully I leave soon... I'm stressing hard, while waiting!

-Sbb

From The Beat: That is terrible. It must feel like time stolen away that you can never get back. Try not to get locked up next time.

I wish I could tell you...

I wish I could tell you how much I miss you baby.

How I miss talking to you at night on the phone,
talking about us, how much we love each other.

How we want a family.

Telling each other what we are gonna name our baby.

Baby I wish I could tell you how much I miss you,
your kisses your touch.

Baby I love you, and I know we gonna make thru this

-Cynthia

From The Beat: We'll quote one of the other girls who is locked up with you: "to all the young women who think that they are ready for kids, make sure that your done screwin' up first!"

What Keeps Me Up At Night

the cold air and the thought of being locked up at night
i think about what were my choices before i came here
and the decisions i made to suffer these consequences
instead of bein' real wit' others, such as friends and stuff
keep it solid wit' yo'self first, to find out where you goin' in life

-Li'l' Josh

From The Beat: We don't think your nights up thinking are wasted time at all. 'Cause what you write here shows a lot of wisdom. Work your way through these consequences, then start mending fences in your own life. What do you want to do with your life?

Like A Waterfall

My love goes a long way as far as I see.
It's like a waterfall when it goes downstream.
It may seem like I don't care but you know I do.
My love is as strong as "I Love You."
Show me the love and I will follow it.
But life is a 'b' so just swallow it.
most of the people hate on love.
But baby guess, what I don't give a "ef." Yours truly

-Lil T-Baby

From The Beat: We love that waterfall image, and the way you mix up street talk and poetic talk in this poem to make it truly yours. Who is girl who inspired this poem, and how long have you known her?

Keep Your Heads Up

This is Smokey from Livermore, you know I'm just doing my time but I'm about to go to rehab for nine months, but it's all good sooner or later, I'll be out on the streets again, so to all doing time, just keep your heads up and do your time and keep putting it down for your varrios out there on the streets and keep it all real.

-Smokey

From The Beat: We'd love to hear what you mean when you say "put it down for your varrios." Because 'putting it down' always seems to end up in stabbings, beatings, shootings, and jail. Loyalty is good, but not when it leads to so many tears, so much destruction. What is loyalty to you?

My Girl

My topic is going to be about this special girl I have. Well I had. I had her for one year and nine months. Well what happened was we were having problems so we broke up and I started messing with another hyna. So one day she called me and told me that she was gonna change, so I got back with her. A couple weeks after, we broke up, then like one week after we were going out again, I got locked up. so I decided to tell her what I did when she broke up with me.

So I confessed to her, and she got really upset and I haven't talked to her or seen her. But I know one day I'll be able to talk and see that special girl. Even though she's not my lady no more, I still love her with all my heart. To all, keep yo' head up.

-Curious

From The Beat: Good luck working things out with your girl... seems like there was some betrayal on both sides, but also it does seem like you both still care about her. Keep us posted and let us know how things turn out.

Used To Believe In Super Heroes

when I was little
i used to think that super heroes
like dragon ball z
existed and i thought it was cool
until now i realize that it's not true
and there's no super hero in this life time
so that makes me feel life sucks
because i always wanted to be a super hero
so in case when i commit a crime
he or she could come save me from the five-oh
or i'd have powers and cut from the five-oh
you feel me

-Chan

From The Beat: Yeah but this puzzle has a simpler solution, right? Don't commit the crime. Be your own hero and save yourself from doing time. You feel? Every time you get away with a crime, you're setting yourself up for the time you don't. Feel?

Funny Scary Story

my funniest scary halloween memory is
this one halloween when i was giving away candy
and my friends was hopping out of the bushes
— scaring everyone — it was so funny

-Twan

From The Beat: It sounds pretty funny, as long as we didn't make the little ones cry.

Jack: A Halloween Story

There once lived a man named Jack. Jack was a man who always kept to himself, and he lived alone with no family or friends. Jack was an old man, he was about sixty five years old. He had a job as a janitor at Fremont High School, in East Oakland. Some kids that go to Fremont would mess with Jack, they would pull pranks on him, they made messes for him on purpose, and they would sometimes beat him up if he talked mess about the things they did to him.

One late night after a football game, he was cleaning up around the school. After he was done cleaning the field, he made his way to the gym, getting ready to pack up his equipment so he could leave. Then he heard the sound of the downstairs entrance open. As he made his way to go see who had come in he slipped on the freshly mopped floor and busted his head wide open.

-Gabriel

From The Beat: This IS a terrifying Halloween story. And not just because of the death at the end. Actually, we thought the real dread came at the beginning, with the picture you painted of a lonely janitor, working the halls late at night being treated so cruelly by the teenagers, and then having no one to come home too. You gave us the chills with your excellent portrait of isolation. Was it based on a true character you knew from school?

Somewhere Very Far

Nights are short days are long
sitting in my cell wanting to go home,
The food is bad I'd rather starve
I want to run somewhere very far
Somewhere without humans or even a car
But maybe a bar
To have a few shots so I can drink and drive
and get pulled over by cops
Roofs leak water so we got to put down pots.

-Anon

From The Beat: We were heartbroken to see that there was no name on this list, because we wanted to give credit to the skills you show in this poem. Of course you know how much we hate to think of you or anyone else putting their lives and families' tears on the line by drinking and driving... but we respect your rhyming style and hope to see more!

there's no super
hero in this life time
so that makes me feel life
sucks
because i always wanted to
be a super hero

When I Was Little

When I was little I used to think: Fremont was a state.

-Tate

From The Beat: It's amazing how the world starts out small and gets bigger and bigger each year as we grow and learn and explore. What is your next boundary to cross?

What I Wish I Could Say

I wish I could tell you I'm committed to change, but I don't know what tomorrow may hold. I wish I could say that I'm going to wake up tomorrow, but that is not guaranteed. Nothing in life is, cause somebody can bust yo' melon on the way up so do it like me, take it an hour at a time.

-King De

From The Beat: You're right, it would be blind to think that you can just be sure you're going to change, especially in an uncertain world, and there's nothing you can do to guarantee that no one will "bust yo' melon." But there's a lot you can do to minimize the risk - For example, almost all of the youth homicides this year took place after 11 at night. And a lot of them took place at three or four in the morning. Just one small decision - to stay inside where it's safe late at night, could save your life. Would you make a change like that?

Enough Said

I Want to use the phone!

-Lil Dt

From The Beat: You said it all, we have nothing to add. Maybe the next time, you can write what you would spit on the phone since you can't use the phone when we are visiting?

My Night Thoughts

When I'm in my room at night I can't go to sleep, 'cause I think about a lot of things while I'm in here.

For example. I think about females while I'm in here. I think about all my friends and family members, and what they're doing. I hope nothing would happen to him. For my girlfriends, I be thinking they better not be out there with any dudes, and for my friends... I hope nothing happens to them like getting shot, and any harm come to them. So that is what keeps me up at night.

The one thing that reminds me of my brother right now is when we listen to Mike Jonez, 'cause we call my brother Mike Jonez, and they both have females, and when me and my brother would be slappin' in his scrape scrape on 20". I think about it a lot 'cause of the situation he's in. If you know the words to the song, you would now what I am talkin' about

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: It sounds like the stuff that keeps you up at night is all the stuff you can't control while you're in here. You're worrying about the safety, health and loyalty of the people you care about outside. That much helplessness must be incredibly stressful - does it help when you think about the things you can control? Your reading, your letters, the way you prepare for your next step? On that note, what are the things you can control while you're in the system?

When I was little, I used to think . . .

I used to think about candy and reading.

-Young Adult

From The Beat: Didn't we all! Well maybe not the reading for everyone... What do you think about most now?

Thought I'd Fly

When I was little I used to think that one day I would learn to fly, because my mom told me I could do anything I put my mind to!

-Tay-Tay

From The Beat: And you still can, but you'll need to get into pilot's school first. Okay?

Scary Story

Once upon a time...

It was a very spooky Halloween. There was boys who always went to a cemetery every Halloween to dig up a old man named Captain Jack. Captain Jack said before he died whoever dug up his grave will be cursed, but they never believed that saying. So one day they dug up his grave and he had flesh on his body. The boys thought that he had no flesh last Halloween, and he didn't, but this time he did because the boys were cursed and they didn't even know it. So one of the boys said, "I have to go to the bathroom," and he went and never came back. So the last boy looked at old man Captain Jack one last time, and Captain Jack jumped out of his grave and took the boy with him in his grave, and never came back!

The end.

-Young Swiss B5

From The Beat: This story gives us the heebie-jeebies... Is this something you heard or read, or is this a story you made up yourself? (We don't want to ask if this is a story that really happened, because that could scare us too much!) We like the line you wrote that "the boys were cursed and they didn't even know it." What curse are you carrying around — and do you know it?

He

He is the Romeo to my Juliet
Off top the best you can get
There aren't enough beautiful words to describe him
I blush every time I see him
My emotions I cannot hide them
He's the dots on my I's
The garter that fits on my upper thighs
He's just so damn perfect
He's my own personal glass slipper that only I can get
He has this incredible aura always surrounding him
If he's not my "one" I'm neva gonna find him
He's the first and only name I want as a tat
And he's all mine... I just wish I could tell HIM that...

-Mousie GU

From The Beat: If you're talking about a little baby, Mousie, then we can buy your description. But if you're talking about a boy, a man, a boyfriend, then we can see how blinded you are by love! Nobody is "so damn perfect," it's just that at times of love, our eyes fail to perceive the flaws in those we love. The problem with that is that sooner or later, that "he-can-do-no-wrong" vision fades away, and you are left with a real human being with all his warts and blemishes. But having seen him as "perfect" in the past, those imperfections get greatly magnified once we can see them. In other words, we're all a collection of perfections and imperfections, and seeing reality for what it is now can spare us some unnecessary pain down the road.

They Won't Let Me Out

Fat Thug locked up. They won't let Fat thug out. I'm getting mad because they want Fat Thug to stay locked up.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: You know what, Fat Thug. We're beginning to think that Fat Thug wants Fat Thug to stay locked up because every time Fat Thug gets out, he quickly does things that he knows can bring him right back. Then, when he comes back, he says he's mad at "them" for keeping him here. When is Fat Thug going to get mad at Fat Thug?

I'm Missin' You

I'm missin' your love
I'm missin' your touch
I'm missin' our lust
I miss how we used to smoke in a cuts
I missin' how we used to get money
I missin' how you let ninjas know I'm your honey
I'm missin' your hold and deep soul
I'm missin' our late night conversation
I'm just missin' what you missin'
So just sit and listen

-Jeannie GU

From The Beat: Jeannie M, we had to take out a word or two to make it PG. Beyond that, you've written a nice love poem. But we worry a little that if all you're thinking about is him, you're not giving yourself the time you need to think about what brought you here and what you'll have to do to stay out of here. Wanting him is not enough. Missing him is not enough. If you fail to take responsibility for where you are and make a firm decision not to repeat the same mistakes, you and he will be reunited, only to be separated again.

Kudos To The General

-Anonymous LCRS

From The Beat: We cut your piece, 'cause The Beat isn't a place for you to sling foolish orders, telling people how they should write their name, especially if you do not have the courage to write your own name!

Can't Wait

Can't wait to get out
Out and do me feel me
I'm about to try and
Stay out of here 'cause
I'm really not tryin'
To see the inside of
The new halls and just
Handle my business
Got to get my shhh straight
So I can hurry up and try
to get back home with pops

-Darius B2

From The Beat: We hope you get out of here and back to your pops very soon, too, Darius, but you didn't tell us anything about how you plan to stay out of here. Getting home is the easy part. Staying home is what's hard. So, when you say you've got to get your "shhh straight," exactly what do you have in mind? What are the changes you envision for your life when you get out of here?

My Darkest Secret

I wish I could tell you this important piece Of my life... but I can't. I wish I could, but its so, so hard. Never have I told anyone this before; never will I.

This I will take to my grave.

It'll do my heart no good to tell you this. You'll judge me, treat me bad, call me names. This secret I have is a shame. Of course, this secret was done alone, and even I don't want to admit to my heart. Wishing I told someone when my soul was so hurt. My pride won't let me do it... it just won't.

Just know it's so devastating I won't even tell my soul mate, my children. I feel it's that deep, my secret. I wish I could tell. You will only make me cry. So not that you'll shame me, but I don't wanna cry.

-Kearrington GU

From The Beat: You don't have to tell us anything that you are so ashamed of, KK. But we know enough of life to be able to tell you that this "terrible secret" is eating away at you, and whether you tell us or not, we really hope you find someone you can unburden yourself to. Maybe a professional psychologist or counselor who is bound to keep your secret confidential. You cannot undo whatever it is you fear revealing, but by holding it in, you continually judge yourself harshly, making it very hard to move on. They say that "confession is good for the soul," and we think "they" know what their talking about!

Almost Through

Well, on the 23rd of this month will be ma second month here, and I'm tired of seeing that same shhh and people every day. Hopefully my group home will come get me next week, and then I will feel betta.

Tomorrow, Queens Bench is coming, and we gone have hella food, so best believe I'ma eat hella candy and chips. But hopefully I'ma be outta here before Halloween, which is in two weeks. See you next week Beat. Bye

-Na Na Boo GU

From The Beat: Trick or Treat? Where's our candy?

Through A Child's Eyes

When I was little, I used to think:

-That people wore glasses for decorations...

-That my broken leg hurt more than anything until I met him

-That wet sand at parks was quick sand

-That jail was for bad people

-Mousie GU

From The Beat: What we like about this piece is that it reveals how distorted a child's reality can be. And it is that same distortion that leads so many children to think that playing games with the law is fun — until reality forces them to see things for what they really are.

First Shot

When I was little I used to think drinkin' was nasty. When I got a little older, I tasted Hennessey. That first shot tasted good. Since then I been drinkin' non-stop.

-Yung B B5

From The Beat: If this is true, then we're sorry you ever tried that first shot. If you have been drinking non-stop since then, you have handed your willpower and discipline over to a substance outside yourself that controls you. You have given up your own self-control and are at the mercy of a drug (alcohol) that doesn't care if you live or die. Our STRONG advice is that you confront your alcohol dependency as seriously as you can, because we can guarantee that if you don't, your life will never be what you want it to be.



Bleedin' Tha Block

Can I bleed tha block?
Can I stay on tha block?
Can I be with ma ninjas?
Can I stay out?
I miss ma block
I miss ma ninjas
Can I just be free?

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: What does it mean "to bleed tha block?" The way we see things, the block is bleeding you. Every time you come here, you write about how much you miss the block, and every time you go out there, you go back to the block and shed more of your blood (if not literally, then emotionally by getting yourself locked up). We know you CAN be free because you have been out, but what we don't know is if you can STAY free since you are so committed to doing the same things over and over that bring you down. So, we don't think you're asking yourself the right questions. You might start by asking yourself what you are willing to sacrifice in freedom in order to hold onto it. If the answer is nothing, then you'll be spending a lot more time as slave of the system.

I Thought I Was Scooby-Doo

When I was little, I used to think I was Scooby-Doo. I thought my brother was Scrappy-Doo. My family was the other people in the gang. So I would always go in the closet to find a monster. 'Til I was six.

-Jb B1

From The Beat: You have a wonderful imagination, J B. Did your brother think he was Scrappy-Doo? Did you find monsters in your closet? Do you still watch Scooby-Doo on TV? Were you disappointed when you realized you were you and not Scooby-Doo?

Rest In Peace, Black

Man, I missed ma OG patna, Black. I wish he was still here. He died in his sleep. I know he wit' God, but I still miss ma ninja. I would always go to his house and just chill, watch a movie and smoke a couple sacks, drive around in his red bucket. I miss that ninja. Rest in peace, Black, until we meet again.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: We're sorry about your friend, Lil' Purp. When you say he died in his sleep, do you mean he died of natural causes, or was he another tragic victim of the streets? How did he get his nickname?

My Baby Girl

You been there from the beginning,
The beginning of the miserable days I've been living in,
Never leaving me all alone,
Supporting me like my back bone,
I know I can count on you,
'Cause you were always there to keep me cool,
The thought of your smile,
Just brightens my day,
From thick and thin,
To the very end,
You'll always be more than a friend

-Jr B2

From The Beat: It sounds like you're blessed with a very loyal and loving friend. But were you as loyal to her (or him)? When you allowed yourself to be taken away, were you thinking about how much

Now You Resting

I wish I could tell you how much I miss you, but I can't, because now you resting. I'll see you someday, big dog.

-Lil' Gam LCRS

From The Beat: It sounds like you've written this sentence to a homie who has died, is that right? Do you feel like writing about him? How did he die? Who was he? Has his death in any way changed you?

Growing Up

Growing up in the Oakland streets was hard because the sacrifices I made, like coming up in juvenile hall back to back. This ain't the life. I grew up in a neighborhood full of killas, hustlas and real ninjas, so all I thought I could do was ride or die for tha block, which I should have not chose, because look at me now. I be terrorizing tha streets. I put fear through fake ninjas. Rest in peace to all.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: Yes, Lil' Purp, you have to overcome a whole lot in order not to return to the life that you were schooled in and the one you are most comfortable operating in — until you have to live with these uncomfortable consequences. But many people have to overcome their pasts and find new ways to live. As a child, you are expected to follow the leader, even when the leader takes you down a dark hole. But you are not a child any more, and now it's time to figure things out for yourself. You've been here enough times to know the score of this game. We urge you to take control of your own life, put yourself in a leadership roll for your own life, and stop "terrorizing the streets" — unless you're ready to pay the biggest prices of all!

Something That Keep Us Here!

Man, it's just something that keep us here. What's gone on, man? It's like when we come, we talk about what we gonna do to get out, but when we get out, we do the same-ass shhh, like it's no change in life.

For me, it's real hard for me to stop doing what I do. I just didn't get it. Coming back an' forth to the hall is not worth what we doing on the block, but we never think of it 'til we get up in the hall. Let's try to change on the outs, not just when we get here.

-DJ Druma B1

From The Beat: Yes, DJ, it is one of the mysteries we deal with every week in The Beat — those who lose their freedom and know what caused it, come in here and promise to stop doing whatever it was, then go out and do it again, thinking that this time the consequences will be different. We think this is a problem of not growing up. Adults often sacrifice pleasures they would like to have at the moment so that they can get something better later on down the line. Children, on the other hand, don't think about "later on down the line," but only about what they want now. That makes it much harder to keep their promises to change... until they gain some maturity and start to act responsibly. What about you? Are you maturing into adulthood, or still thinking like a child? We hope everybody reads this and follows your great advice — especially you!

The Killers Vs. The Townspeople

This story begins in 1800, when the world's top four killers were resurrected from the dead. First one alive was Freddy Kruger. Second one alive was Jason Voorhees. Third one alive was the Texas Chain Saw Killer. Fourth one alive was Michael Myers.

Each person went through towns, killing people, and they stood there watching blood fly, guts spilling out, heads flying off, body parts flying off. But later on, after each person killed about 200 people each, and later on in the bloodiest, longest, brutal fight in history, nobody had won this battle. But since the fight, the city was free from harm and nobody longer died.

-Alex B1

From The Beat: What a story, Alex! What happened to the four killers? Who, if anyone, is still alive? If we really lived in cities where nobody died, how long do you think it would take before things were so crowded that nobody could move? Do you think these four make-believe killers are more scary than some real-life killers like Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin? We don't know if you know all these names, but together they killed more people than Kruger, Voorhees, Texas Chain Saw and Myers could have killed in their life times!

The Monkey In The Middle

I wish I could simply tell both my past and future. Ask the system. They know, or do they? Where's the start, where's the end, or is this it? Oh, yeah, I'm the monkey in the middle.

-Donte B1

From The Beat: Do you mean you're the monkey in the middle of your past and future? If that's what you mean, then we're all monkeys between our pasts and our futures. The system — which you gave power over your life — may have your immediate future in their hands, but the rest is up to you. And nobody can predict the end...

Brought Back To Live

It started in 2000. On Halloween two men were in the woods. They were looking for two dogs that went missing in the morning. As they were in the woods, they seen two ghosts and four bears. The ghosts shooked them up and the bears killed them and brought them back to life.

-E-Boy B1

From The Beat: What a strange story, E-Boy. Did the bears kill them and also bring them back to life, or was that the work of someone else? This is kind of short, so we would love to read a longer version of this story with all

Returning The Favor

Once upon a time there was a man who was scared of nothing. He was always doing things that made people scared out of their wits, until one night he was sleeping and something was in the house with him. When he woke up and seen what it was, a shiver went down his spine. It was his ex-wife, who had been possessed by the devil, and as he tried to run, she jumped on top of him. In a split second, she started to eat his innards. When he thought about all the things he had done, he realized that his ex-wife he had scared to death, and she was just returning the favor.

-Lil' Phillip B1

From The Beat: This would make a good horror story on TV. Do you ever treat females so scandalously that you worry they might want to get revenge on you? Do you believe in karma — what you do comes back to you? That's what this story represents for us. Truly scary!

My Halloween

I went trick or treating with my sister and her friend. We left my house at, like, 7:00 pm. Then we went trick or treating the whole night, 'til, like, 11:30 pm. After that we went home and we ate up all the candy. Then we watched scary movies 'til, like, 3:00 in the morning. Then we went to sleep.

-Joseph B1

From The Beat: This sounds like a truly fun night without any bad stuff happening at all! Were you and your sister and her friend wearing costumes? Did you eat all the candy that first night?

I Hate Being In Here

Man, I hate being in this place. I call it hell, man, 'cause see, me? I ain't listening to another man or nothing. Asking to use the bathroom or as we say can I get a head call. This shhh ain't for me. People telling me when to eat or when to use the bathroom. People telling me when to take a shower. Man, I can't take this shhh no more. Once I get out I'm not comin' back. I hate being in this place.

-Db B2

From The Beat: Well, if this really isn't for you, you have the power to change things up. If your freedom is worth enough to you, you'll find a way to hold onto it!

Change

I wanna change but it's gone take time
I want money but it's gonna cause a crime
I gotta lotta time but it seems to be running out
I wanna hit one and come up, but without the
loud shout
I don't have much but I have enough
It seems uncompleted, but tough
The truth is I don't think I'm ever gonna change
To stop what I know now, it would be really
strange
I wanna pump my brakes because I'm living fast
But if the times too late the words will be my
last...

-Vago B4

From The Beat: This is a clever poem, Vago, but clever won't keep you free if you're dedicated to the lifestyle that's led you here. Yes, change does take time, but the decision to change takes no time at all. You either make it or you don't. Here's the reality you don't seem to appreciate: You are now stopped! Stopped cold! All you can do is ask permission for every move you make. You are, in short, a slave of the county. But where you are is lightweight, and what lies ahead not only will force that change on you that you're unwilling to force on yourself, but will do it in an environment of official violence and shootings, unofficial rape and assaults, and the systematic and deliberate stripping away of your humanity and identity. We hope you never have to experience this reality because if you do, you will then be writing those tragic poems with the words "if only" somewhere inside. A word to the wise.

I Wish I Could Tell You

What's really good Beat Within? This De'Aries, and I wish I could tell you how I feel about my PO, the judge and my public defender trying to instantly send me back to the YA for dummy-ass long. You what, forget that! I'm gone tell y'all anyway. They really most definitely trying to send me on a one-way ticket to CYA.

I was already up there for a hot 90 days, and I did cool up there. Everything was kosher, you feel Beat? Well anyway, I did the time up there and passed they punk-ass evaluation, but they said, based on my past life, I'm a perfect candidate for CYA. Before I leave YGC, it's goin' down! Most definitely.

-De'Aries B5

From The Beat: Exactly what do you mean by those last lines? What do you mean "it's goin' down?" We hope you aren't planning to do anything stupid to show "them" how wrong they are about sending you back to the Y. You can't hurt them. You can only hurt yourself.

Hoping

Tomorrow I got court hoping the judge let me go home, back to my family, back to my peoples and everybody I care about. Thizz izz young Enano and I'm out.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Apparently, the judge didn't let you go home, and we're sorry about that. But Enano, can you tell us what your plans are for when the judge does let you go home? Getting back with your family gives you a warm feeling, and we appreciate that, but dreaming about thizzing in the same sentence makes us worry that you have wasted your time here by not planning for your own freedom, your own future. Wishing to be home and safe is not the same as being home and safe. You have to make a contribution to build a treasure like that. So, what are you contributing to your own success?

Life Gets Really Complicated When You Get Older

I wish I could tell you how complicated your life can get as you get older. When I was younger, I never knew that there was such a thing as jail. When I got into trouble at a young age, I only got yelled at. As you get older, life gets shorter. Days pass by so fast, so don't take life for granted.

-Chi Frank LCRS

From The Beat: Why did you get yelled out? When did you realize how fast and precious time is? Can you uncomplicated your life? What's your plan?

I Hate Being Locked Up

I hate being locked up because my life is on hold. I could be out enjoying myself, doing hella shhh for real. I would be going to school every day getting on females. I ain't going to lie, Beat. I would also be smoking hella purp with the homies on the block really hugging the block for real.

While being locked up, I think more about my life and what I want to be. But it's also a blank spot because I don't know what my life going to turn out to be. I always hope for the best. It's hella stressful being locked up for real, but you know me, I always make the best out of a bad situation.

To all in here, keep your head up, never down brah brah.

-Lgb B2

From The Beat: That "hella shhh" you're looking forward to is exactly what will bring you back here, and with a quickness! Sometimes when we read your pieces, we think you're on your way out of here and into something better for your future. But then we read pieces like this and it makes us realize that you still have some serious growing up to do. When you think about your life and what you want out of it, how much are you doing to make it happen?

I Miss Being Out

Man what's up with The Beat? I really miss being out 'cause in this place I call hell you can't get no money. You can't even get no girls or nothing. I could be out with the thugs on the block or something chillin' with the wifey or something. Man I miss being out.

-D-B B2

From The Beat: We see you coming right back here if all you can think about is getting back to the block. We see nothing in your thinking that tells us you're preparing yourself to stay out of here, or even connecting your own behavior to the consequences you say you hate. If you get out of here and come back, most people will conclude (including us) that you really don't hate it here enough!

YGC

Man, here at YGC time go by pretty fast especially when I get mail. Being step four I been getting cool 15-minute phone calls. Well peace, out and have a happy Halloween Beat.

-Scary B4

From The Beat: Thanks for the Halloween wishes, Jason, but do you mean this is all you could come up with in an hour's workshop?

Halloween Dat Hurt

One Halloween story I have is when I was just into my teens and I went out that night. I was stabbed in my arm and in my back. I don't know who did it, but that shhh hurt that day.

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: This doesn't sound like your best Halloween memory, Jokes. But we're curious about one thing — how do you manage to sit in a writing workshop for an hour and produce only three sentences?

I Wish I Could Tell You

I wish I can tell you how I was feeling
When they took me away from you
I wish I can tell you how much I really
Love and care about you
I wish I can tell you how much I want to hold you
right now
I wish I can tell you how bad I want you
To change your last name and how much
I really love you wifey.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: You will be able to tell her how you feel when you walk out of here. But words are very weak expressions of feelings compared to actions. Show her how much you love her by never giving the system the power to take you from her again.

When I was Little I Used to Think

When I was like eight, I thought I was gone make it in life. But now I'm in here in YGC. But I'm gone get out soon, and when I get out, I'm proceed my plan, and stay focused on my school work, play football, go to college and go pro.

But first, it's up to me to do what I'm going to do. But when I was lil', I ain't think I was gone end up in here. Ever since I started hangin' up in the 'hood, life done change as time go by, and dat's when hard time comes. I start messing wit' the law, getting played by the cops, and I now realize your homies don't come and see you or write chu. You gots to know who your real friends are.

-Jeremiah B2

From The Beat: Even more important than knowing who your real friends are is you becoming a real friend to yourself! That means, leading yourself into the life you describe here that begins with going to school and ends — maybe — with you being a pro football player. (If you don't quite make that goal, you will have a good education to fall back on.) Get to know yourself and become your own best friend!

I Wish I Could

I wish I could tell you how I live my life
I wish I could tell you how to fight the system
I wish I could tell you right from wrong
I wish I could stop my mom from singing that same sad song
I wish I could tell you how I live day to day
I wish I could stop people from hating on me and mine
I wish I could walk a straight line
I wish I didn't have to push a hard line
So I could live day to day without beef on my mind
I wish the police wouldn't try to bring me to this nasty place
all the time

I wish I could leave my mom with something to be proud of
-Dubb B4

From The Beat: How much do you wish these things? If you wish you could walk a straight line, why can't you? If you wish you could give your mom something to be proud of, why can't you? You make yourself sound helpless to change, just a passive leaf floating downstream wherever it takes you. You have a will. You have a mind. You have the ability to change things in your life that you really want to change. Wishing for change without doing anything to bring that change about is nothing more than a cop-out.

When I Was Little

When I was little I used to think I could never get killed or nothing bad could happen or even get hurt. I didn't know about it. No one ever told me about it. I found out about it on my own.

One day when I went to Mexico and went to my cousin's house, he was selling drugs out of a house and the police raided his house. And the worst thing about it was that I was sleeping, but then they whipped our ass because they thought I was lying to them about the main head who supplies. I really did not know though. For two hours getting my ass whipped! I came out with a broken rib. I popped my own rib out with a bottle.

-Lil' Chicano B4

From The Beat: This is a terrible way to have to learn that some things have bad consequences. What do you mean you popped your rib out with a bottle? Didn't you go to the doctor? Did you or your cousin get charged with a crime? Are the Mexican police any different from the ones in this country? Now that you have learned that bad things can happen to you, what changes do you plan to make in your life when you get out of here?

I Wish I Could Tell You Something

I wish I could tell you how I feel. I wish I could tell you a story about my life and my childhood, but it might be boring. But I got to talk about something so you won't be like this ninja is so boring he do not know how to talk to a woman. Let me show you that a ninja can treat a woman. But some women don't like a ninja that think that he can do anything, but some women do.

Man, all I am trying to say, young women and young brothers, is that a woman and a man need somebody that can do something with their life or their self.

I hope that you like this Beat. So all of my brothers and women, y'all do what you do. Stay down and stay on y'all shhh. I got to go, but one love.

-Flat Head B5

From The Beat: This is good advice, Flat Head. Do you plan to be one of those people that does something with his life or himself? What are your plans?

So Homesick

I wish I could tell my PO how homesick I am, and how bad I wanna go home, but she already givin' me a out-of-city placement. I guess it's for the best even though I don't see it how.

-Mousie GU

From The Beat: Hey, it's still not too late to tell your PO how you feel if you haven't done it already. We're not saying it will make a difference, but communication, they say, is the key. Wherever you go, just make the most of it.

Younger

When I was younger, I used to think nothing was worse than New Orleans. Back then, murders used to happen every day. I would be like, "Damn another ninja!" That was two states ago. Now I'm in San Francisco, Ca., where we are considered just as bad, where having a gun is something to be proud of.

-Guy B5

From The Beat: New Orleans has a very bad reputation for violent crime, so we know what you mean. The tragic truth is that San Francisco and Oakland and Richmond are fast catching up! We think it's hard for the young to understand the reality of violent gun death — its permanence, its lasting effects on those left behind, its guarantees of keeping the turf wars alive. What about you, Guy? Is having a gun something you're proud of? We sure hope not.

I'm Back

I remember sitting in my house four months pregnant. My friend came and got me. Her and her baby daddy was going to a party. They asked me if I wanted to go. I said yes. We caught the bus to San Bruno. We walked to the park by E.R. Taylor. When we got there, there was hella people. They were drinkin' and smokin' weed.

I sat down on the bench next to my friend. Then this drunk dude came over, said hi, and sat down next to us. He was very nice. We let him lay on our laps because he passed out. Before he passed out, he told us we looked nice.

I had to leave when it hit 12:00 a.m. The next day my friend told me she told that dude that he had sex with me and got me pregnant. He believed her because he was so messed up the night before. I don't get down on the first night. And I would not disrespect my child like that.

-La Ronda GU

From The Beat: The dude may have been nice, La Ronda, but he was an idiot if he could be convinced that you already knew you were pregnant from a one-night-stand the night before! All kidding aside, though, we admire you for having enough respect for yourself to know that the kind of evening you described could not end the way your friend convinced this dude that it did. What happened after that? Does he still think he is the father of your child? Oh yeah, one more thing... do you know how we hate to read the two-word title at the top of this piece?

When I'm a Free Man

When I'm a free man, I'm gone want to cry 'cause I been in that cell, and it feel like a mini hell. I am never coming back. And telling you the truth, when I am a free man, I am going to sleep in my own bed with my girl, and touch her soft skin instead of the rough bed that I been sleepin' in for almost seven months that feel like years. And I guarantee you not gone see me back in this place after I'm free 'cause my job and my girl go keep me out. She's my heart and my world and my good luck charm, and that's all I needed to keep me free and out of the streets. I can't wait to be free!

-Berty B5

From The Beat: We can certainly understand why you'd want to get out of here as fast as possible, and why you're looking forward to getting back with that love of your life. But there is no woman and no lucky charm that can keep you free! That's entirely your own responsibility, and will be determined by the choices you make, not by anyone else keeping you down. The only way to show your girl just how much you miss and love her is to stop doing the things that allow the system to take you from her, and that's in your hands.

Can My Dreams Come True?

When I was little, I wanted to be somebody big, like somebody on TV. I used to sing all the time to myself. Dance in front of the mirror. But as I got older, my dream never came true. So I stopped believing and started messing up, like stop going to school and staying out all night. Mom, dad don't know where I am at. Doing me. Don't care about nobody not even myself.

But I wish I can change myself around and be somebody. But I end back up in here every time I get out. And that not a good thing.

-Shelly M GU

From The Beat: Dreams just don't come true on their own. You have to contribute real effort to make them happen. You say your dream never came true, but you are not even grown yet, so how do you know what dreams will or will not come true? We read a story in the newspaper just this week about a girl who grew up in the 'hood, having to survive any way she could... and now she has turned that experience into an acting career. She is the star of a TV series set in Baltimore called "The Wire." It's never too late to change yourself. Most important, get back into school to get all the keys (knowledge) that you will need to open the doors to your dreams.

I used to sing all the time to myself. Dance in front of the mirror.

A Child's Thoughts

When I was little, I used to think hat I was gong to be a cop. Ha ha ha. I thought that the moon was made of cheese.

-Boo Boo B4

From The Beat: A lot of cops actually come out of the same backgrounds that so many of the young people who end up here come out of. When did you stop believing the moon was made of cheese?

My Halloween

On my Halloween I had fun on Castro. Me and my thugs, we had a ball. It was crackin'. I had so much fun. I never been to no place like that.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: You've probably never been to a place like that because there is no other place like that! Well, Halloween on the Castro may be a thing of the past because this week that celebration turned violent. We're glad you were locked up for this one because nine people got shot! But anyway, we're glad you and your "thugs" had such a good time.

Way Scary

Y'all wanna know what's pretty freakin' scary? Playing volleyball outside on Halloween, and lookin' in the window and seein' all the wounded B4 boys wishfully thinking that we're checking them out...Ewww! Haha!

-Mousie GU

From The Beat: Very funny Mousie! Wonder that the boys will think about this? Are you telling us that the wounded GU girls aren't wishfully hoping that those same boys are checking them out — or aren't doing some

Who Am I

Who am I?

I am someone that defends herself and do what I have to do to get to a better place

Who am I?

I am someone that thought I stand alone but have plenty of people behind me to guide me

Who am I?

I am someone that is somebody who will leave the halls and never look back

Who am I?

I am someone that was always put down and said I would never amount to nothing, but I will

Who am I?

I am a person that plans to do good, but the system wants me to mess up, but I refuse

Who am I?

I am someone that refuse to mess up anymore, and be "Somebody!"

-Nay B GU

From The Beat: No one knows you better you than you know yourself. You must be doing something right to have good people behind you showing support every step of the way. It's clear that you have a good heart along with good intentions, so never mind assumptions that people make about you. As long as you follow your heart — and keep it true — things will surely fall into place.

Don't Judge Me

Please don't judge me, because you don't even know me. You might, but you really don't know me, what's under my skin, what's my future. You don't know me so don't judge me. You think I'm bad, but I'm really not. I might fight, but I'm more like a lover. My boy like it and we gone rise to the top to them gates of heaven to see better days and lay back in the shade.

So don't judge me. I'm me. I'm me and only me. Don't act like nobody. I get love from everybody, so like I said, don't judge me 'cause you ain't God or me.

Keep ya head up. To my boo, I'ma be home in a few ...

-Starr B GU

From The Beat: It's very hard not to make judgments about people, even when the judgments prove to be wrong. In fact, we bet you make judgments about us (The Beat) and others (the staff) all the time that you can't possibly know about. That's just human nature. So don't worry about how others judge you (except the courts, of course, who are given the specific legal power to judge you). Examine your own life and judge yourself — then act according to that judgment.

How I Feel

I wish I could tell you exactly how I feel.
 My feelings are too strong for words.
 I really want to be able to keep it real.
 Being in jail for Halloween.
 That is way too extreme.
 I'm only just a young teen.
 I'ma let it be known
 I'm in juvenile but I feel way too grown.
 I keep a huge smile on my face, yep I'ma let it be shown.
 Now I'm feeling headaches and pain
 knowing that my probation officer gonna throw my life
 down the drain.
 I wish I could tell you exactly how I feel.
 So tell me why do you care? Is it because I'm here or is it
 your job?
 Or is it because you want me to eat my vegetables like corn
 on the cob? Or is it when I hit someone the system dial 911
 and the system call me 5150?
 I wish I could tell you what I been through in life,
 but me thinking about the struggles feel like a sharp knife.
 Now I'm in juvenile knowing I can't be me,
 because I'm locked up and I'm not even free.
 I'm thinking about the world and I cant even sleep.

-Rosevette GU

From The Beat: We understand why you're feeling pain being locked away from all you love, but we don't think your life is being thrown down the drain. Before your probation officer got into the act, you had to give the system power over your life, which means that you threw your life into the hands of that probation officer, so you have to accept the responsibility. But the good thing about being responsible is that you can claim real responsibility for the rest of your life, meaning it's not up to anyone else, from POs to DAs. The direction your future will take is up to you!

When I Was Little . . .

When I was little, I used to think that coming to juvenile, that meant people were hard. I used to think that I wanted to come to juvenile. I used to think that you had to have all the girls to be cool.

-Quis B1

From The Beat: Don't you think this is related to thinking like a child? Don't we always want to be "big" and "grown" when we're small? You were looking at models of "adulthood" that spent lots of their young years locked up, and that was your model. But now that you are no longer a child, you can make your own definition of what it means to be a man. Now you can define what it means to be "cool." So what are your definitions?

Money

M- makes you do shhh you really wouldn't
 O- on one hittin' them when time's is hot
 N- no one gone stop you until you get caught
 E- Everywhere and anywhere is a spot
 Y- yo packets is fat and shhh going yo' way

-Vago

From The Beat: P- puts your life in harm's way; R- raises questions about your moral values; I- is risk the loss of everything, one way or another; S- shedding tears over predictable consequences; O- opening your mind to a bigger world you haven't even imagined; N- not where you or anybody wants to end up!

My 18 Birthday

What's up Beat? This ya boy Tha Kid. I am writing to tell y'all about my 18th birthday in Juvenile Hall. My birthday was on Sunday Oct. 15. When I woke up, the first thing I did was look at them four walls and that door and screamed!. I was hella mad. I never thought I would spend my 18th birthday locked up. I definitely wasn't feelin' that. I just sat in my room thinking about everything I could've been doing.

I couldn't just sit around feeling sorry for myself, so I started hittin' hella push-ups till it was time for rec. At rec, I called my girl, which made me madder 'cause knowing if I was out I would have been there. Instead I went to my room and went to sleep. I woke up the next day thinking the next time I think about doing something stupid I'm gone think about my 18th birthday.

In a minute, Beat, I'm out.

-Kid B5

From The Beat: Besides the x-rated material we had to take out, we feel this piece about being in a cage on your 18th birthday! We'd be screaming too! It's fair enough to be angry at yourself for giving your freedom up to the system, but it's far more beneficial to focus on the future. We like your strategy of keeping the memory of this day firmly in your mind so that when those temptations come along to do the things that lead to lock-up, you will have the intestinal fortitude (the courage) to say "No!" Maybe you should tape this piece to your bedroom mirror just to remind you how you had to satisfy yourself on this special day...

When I Was Little, I Used To Think...

When I was little, I used to think I was going to grow up and be like my cousin, "Killa Mont." I used to think like he was the sickest ninja, and I wanted to be like him all my life. RIP, Killa Mont. We all we got. Killa Mont was the sickest ninja. I thought he was a money ninja.

-Li'l' Kata B1

From The Beat: We're sorry about Killa Mont's death, Li'l' Kata, but when you think back on him, do you still think he was the "sickest ninja?" Do you think he would rather be "the sickest ninja" or alive? We know that you loved and respected him, but do you still want to be like him? In what ways do you want to be like him, and in what ways do you want to be different?

Living To Learn

When I was little, I used to think that I would have to grow up fast and have to take care of myself. I was around 10 or 11, and some real crazy stuff happened to where my family had to split up. Then I had a lot of responsibilities, or I thought I did, and I took care of what I thought I was living at the time to do.

Then I started to grow with the idea that I have all the responsibilities of a grown-up. That stuck with me all the way till now. I know I don't have to and shouldn't have to always be the only one taking care of me, but I do when I know that "the business is the business" and I gotta look out for my self.

But I learned that it's not all that bad to learn early because I'll be good and independent by the time I'm out of my teens. I live to learn lessons and that's what I feel like I'm slowly doing.

-Kearrington GU

From The Beat: You are preparing yourself for adult responsibilities by taking care of yourself, and that is something you can be very proud of. At the same time, by allowing yourself to get locked up, you are not meeting some basic responsibilities to yourself. So when you say you are slowing learning how to live independently, we hope this experience has taught you much, and that you know how to avoid it in the future.

A Man, A Girl, And Her Ghost

One day a man killed a girl. Then, when she was being attacked and killed, she begged for her life. Then, at the part when she was being killed, she stared at the guy killing her as she dies.

One year after, he saw a girl somewhere in his house and thought he was imagining something. Then, by that time, he started to get crazy, 'cause that ghost keeps coming around him. One day he saw the ghost and it was a girl that looked like the girl he killed a year before. Then he got so scared, he had a heart attack and died.

-Ramon B1

From The Beat: This would make a good "Twilight Zone," Ramon. Did you hear this story, or did you just make it up out of your head? Do you know any real ghost stories? Have you ever seen one?

I Wish I Could Tell You

Man, I wish I could tell you a lot of things — more like everything that runs through my mind all day, every day. People wonder why I look so evil. They tell me to put a smile on my face. I tell 'em like this, "Why trip on me?"

You not me!"

I ask myself who am I, who am I. I am a young black woman stuck in a messed up society with people that don't care. I'm young and need to be respected by others.

Who am I? I don't really think y'all understand what I'm sayin'. See me, I'm smarter than yo' average. But that really don't mean nothing to most. But like I always say, I get ahead and do my best to keep my head up and shine. That's who I am, a black star trying to make it out the system and make a better life for myself.

-Starr B GU

From The Beat: What makes you a star? It's a good way to look at yourself because it gives you a goal, but we're wondering what you mean by the term. In other words, how are you trying to make it out of the system? How are you trying to make a better life for yourself? What are doing right now to prepare yourself not just to get out of here, but to stay out of here? Do you have specific plans for change? Do you plan to finish your schooling, for example?

A Halloween Memory

One this one Halloween in 2003 I had my nephew on that day. He was only four months, and I wanted him to have a good first Halloween. I didn't take him out because it was too cold for him to go out, so I went to the grocery store, brought him four bags of candy and put pink cheeks on him.

We sat on the couch and ate... well I ate the candy. That was a good day for me and him because as long as he was happy and there with me, I felt like everything was okay.

-Kearrington

From The Beat: This is a very sweet Kearrington. If you missed this Halloween (which you probably did), why not look to next year's celebrations to really do it right with your nephew. He will be three years old and enjoy putting on a costume and getting his own candy. Something to shoot for...

Never Thought

When I was little, I used to think that I would never end up in the system. I also thought that I would never end up in YGC, taking showers with other people. I also thought that I would never miss my mom the way I do when I'm in here. And I also thought that I would not be wearing the next boy's underwear and the next boy's socks. So when I get out of here, I think I'm going to do the right thing so I can stay out of here.

-Young Sparkie B4

From The Beat: Nobody thinks about coming to jail when they're children, and children don't think about the consequences of their actions — which is what got you here. Just remember that you haven't ended up in the system because you're a long, long way from ending up anywhere. You still have a lifetime of choices to make that will determine how — and when — you will end up.

JOJO Writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, we give you an ego-stroking letter to us and a love poem to his girlfriend. It's sad to see a man longing for his woman while in jail because we know everyone needs affection, especially in a place where affection is more rare than getting struck by lightning. We appreciate a heart like his and hope you readers do too.

I miss your sweet, sweet face. I miss the smell of your hair
 I miss hearing you laugh. I miss you 'cause you're not here
 I miss hearing you cry. I miss every part of your body
 I lie awake and wonder, do you ever miss me?

Dear Beat Within Staff

I just got my first subscription of your article and I'm really glad that I requested to put my name on your subscription list. I enjoy reading all the writings, stories, and poems of these talented people because somehow I can relate my life story to them.

I've been incarcerated for five years now and writing is one my outlets to be just myself and express my feelings freely. I'm pretty sure you'll be hearing more from me in days ahead.

Here's a poem I wrote for the love of my life. The one who's everything to me. The one my heart desires. We've been through a lot in life but our love keeps us stronger. I feel that we belong together and it's just a matter of time that we can be in each other's arms again. And then life would be a lot better. It's our love that gives me strength and the reason I wake up each morning to face new challenges that this place could bring.

I would appreciate it very much if you could publish this poem. Thank you very much and more power...

Respectfully yours,

I have been sitting in a prison cell now for 30+ years, and I'm getting tired of the crap that I have to put up with each day from the young people that come to this place each day.

K. STRACK 'Do you want to be like me?' is a very good question to ask when you've been in prison for thirty plus years constantly watching youngsters who come in trying to prove themselves. And though the answer to his question should be an obvious one, we still find ourselves doing the very same things that could lead us there. We all see this out here, but he sees it more clear because he's been through it. He's done hell a time and is nice enough to share his thoughts with us, so we hopefully won't have to go through the same. He's writing from Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA, and if it's up to him nobody reading this will be his neighbor anytime soon.

Do You Want To Be Like Me?

I have been sitting in a prison cell now for thirty plus years, and I'm getting tired of the crap that I have to put up with each day from the young people that come to this place each day. I came to this place when I was seventeen and I have been here ever since.

I had to laugh, because I used to be like you! I wouldn't listen to anyone and I knew better than my elders. Sound familiar? Hey I agree wit' you, no one knows what you are going through, only you, but I am going to tell you my story and just maybe it will shed a little light on what you are going through, or maybe how to get out of the rut that will bring you here with me.

Growing up my parents divorced when I was four, and they didn't fight to see who would get me, but who would end up with me. What happened was each year I was left on the doorstep of another with a bag of clothes in my hand. Well I grew up tough and I hated everything and everybody, every

I Miss You

I'm not used to being without you
 I cry myself to sleep because I don't have you to hold
 I'm in a deep, dark rut and I can't seem to get out
 I often kiss your picture, your name I often shout.

I miss your sweet, sweet face. I miss the smell of your hair
 I miss hearing you laugh. I miss you 'cause you're not here
 I miss hearing you cry. I miss every part of your body
 I lie awake and wonder, do you ever miss me?

I'm not used to waking up without you tucked away in my arm
 I used to put you there to keep you safe and sound
 Do you remember laying down there and how it used to feel?
 When I would pull you closer to show my love is real?

I miss your sweet, sweet face. I miss the way you look at me
 I miss the way you walk. I miss the way you breathe
 I miss the way you sleep. I miss the way you play
 I lie awake and wonder, why it has to be this way?

I'm not used to the silence, I should hear your gentle voice
 Instead I hear the echo of this prison wall slamming shut
 Will I get to see you or speak to you this month?
 I thought I heard you whisper, I thought I heard you say;

I miss your sweet, sweet face. I miss your gentleness
 I miss your great big hugs. I miss your tender kisses
 I miss the way you held me, I miss the way we slept
 I lie awake and wonder, will you keep those promises you made?

I miss your sweet, sweet face. I miss the good times we had
 Even though we're apart, please know this is just temporary
 Sooner or later we'll be together again
 This time I promised, I will never let you go again.

time I would get a friend I would have to move, every time I would start to understand the school work I would move. I just gave up and became a hardcore ass hole! I couldn't read or write, more than a third grade level and by age twelve I was living on the streets and as I said I knew it all. I got into drugs both selling and using. What else is there to do? On July 1976 what I thought was a joint was laced with P.C.P. and I went off, killing two people. With no money I was given a PD (Public Defender) who didn't give a damn about me. So I was given 7 to life. Meaning I will spend the rest of my life in prison unless I get lucky. Again being the hardhead that I was I spent the first 6 years in the hole because I had to show everyone that I was hard. I was stabbing people, jumping on guards and boy did I get beat up, but that just made me madder.

To make a long story shot I was sent to Folsom, where the hard cases went and when I got there an old man (40) was in the cell. He showed me how to do time and become a man. See I found out that the stuff I was pulling was juvenile. A real man learns all that he can so that he can be in control. It took me years but now I have a high school diploma, and even have 12 units of college. I am learning law and may even get my ass out of this place. But it has taken me thirty years to get to where I am now. I can only hope that it doesn't take you as long. Got to school and learn, make the teachers do their job! Become something more than a hardhead.

Big Bad Cholo

I hear the rattle of keys, as the guard passes by,
It's lonely and scary at night to hear grown men cry.
Surrounded by cement walls and steel cold bars,
I can't remember the last time I gazed up at the stars.

You see being locked up has been a part of me,
There's a lot of "smiling faces," in here you can't
show your misery.

I'm gonna tell you a little story of how I ended up
here,

How this big bad cholo came face to face with his
worst fear.

It was a rainy cold night, and me and the homies
were on a mission,
I had the gun in my hand and that's when I made the
wrong decisions.

We saw a group of vatos on the corner all dressed in
black,

When a veterano from my hood said "Fuzzy" get
ready to attack,

I leaned out the window and pointed my gun,
Right there it hit me, that gang banging was no
longer fun.

I pulled the trigger once, twice and probably another
time,

And for what? To show these targets that I was down
for mines?

Well that was a mistake, that, to this day, I regret,
Now I live a life behind bars,

And the nightmare of that night is something I shall
never forget.

So if you're young and gang banging, change your
life while you could Because if it was up to this big
bad cholo, shhh I know I would.

MARCOS CASSANI

...And next up we have a first time poet as far as our pages our concerned, but an experienced poet in that he's been writing poetry for quite some time now. In his letter he says he has hundreds of poems, been locked up since 1989, and that he's trying to get published. So until he comes out with his book, he can use us as a platform to get his stuff out there to the people that really matter, and that's our readers. In the following poem titled, "Big Bad Cholo," he courageously tells of a regret he has. Can you guess what it is? Well, obviously it's the experience that landed him in jail. Hopefully, at least one of you will learn something from this story because the lesson is forced right in your face. He's writing from Spring Valley, CA. Maybe he'll reach you, if not, keep reading there are plenty more lessons to be learned.

To: The Beat Within

Let me introduce myself, my name is Marcos Cassani. I've been locked up for almost 16 years for a crime that I regret everyday of my life. But since it happened when I was a minor, the lord is letting me go home next year around April.

I believe I have a talent in writing poetry, I have written hundreds of them over the years. My poetry has made people laugh, they have made people even shed tears. I have never sent a poem to any magazine or publisher due to the fact that all my poetry is actually real life events of my life. I guess you can say my poems are stories of what I have lived through from love to hate, from gangs to drugs, you name it I can put it into a poem.

Like I mentioned, I go home next year, and my dream now is to get my poetry out there to our youths that are going down the wrong path in life. I first heard about your magazine through a friend that is locked up with me, his pen name is "Solomon." Actually he convinced me to share my poetry with you, like I said I write a lot of poetry, but this one is just an example of how I write. I would be so proud to see at least one of my poems in your magazine. If even one of my poems inspires one kid to change his ways, then I have made a difference.

Sincerely,

FRISKIE

One of our most favorite poets is back on the scene again. We first met Friskie in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall (Hillcrest) where she blew our minds with her raw and uncut poetry about love and the pain she goes through on a daily basis. Nothing has changed regarding her stellar writing, other than the fact it's gotten better, but much has changed in her attitude towards life. She went to the Youth Authority and got out before working with us for a while. It was a pleasure to have her in our office with her incredible insight and bubbly personality. However, after a while she stumbled again and is now back in the Youth Authority (Ventura) in Camarillo, CA. We know that for some of us it takes many falls before we can dust ourselves off without tripping in the mud again. We just hope Friskie can dust herself off for good before she finds herself in a predicament where the consequence is one that lasts for a lifetime. Her potential is limitless and we can't stress that enough. Well, maybe y'all should see for yourselves...

Needing More

Searching for a helping hand,

Lost somewhere in a stranger's land.

Loneliness and discomfort are the feelings that I feel.

I've been used and abused now I'm wishin' I'm not real.
Crying on my bunk, all-alone while I'm shedding those tears.

Go up for parole in about a half a year
getting shot down my #1 fear.

I feel empty, I feel alone,

Nobody I call wanna pick up the phone

I got some homies here,

That tell me to be strong and not shed a tear.

But it's hard when I feel the things I do,

Damn; I wish I could be you.

I wanna just escape myself,

No sense of self worth or wealth.

Just an empty vessel, another forgotten voice,

But in this life I have no choice.

I want to break down,

Whenever no ones around.

In CYA treatment, talking about our past

Something that will always last.

Trying not to cry, can't be a lil' punk,

But with myself, I got serious funk.

I need a box of tissues,

Just thinking 'bout all my issues.

I need to find my voice
Because to live I have no choice.

I'm comin' on out the rain,

Feeling the string of pain.

Trying to become sane

And get the message through my brain.

I got what it takes to be all that I can, I can do it by myself,

And I'll never again be just thrown upon the shelf.

Living a life one day at a time,

Going to school to learn how to rhyme.

As I change my ways,

I'm in search of better days.

But I might get a six month time add

because of something that I did

Now staff know and I once again wish to be that innocent lil' kid.

I can't take this shhh anymore

My heart's hit the floor.

I'm ready to go off,

Chokin' while I cough.

Can't do anything, I'm tryna handle this shhh like a boss.

I stay tryna be strong,

But I been locked up too long.

I need out but I can't find the way,

I been feelin' lost every freakin' day.

I need out, I need hope,

I need to get through this without usin' dope.

I need to be set free from my own mentality.

Can't anyone see the pain I'm feeling,

I don't wanna end up being the next ward to be hanging from the

ceiling. Can't I get a ten-minute break,

Oh my god, I need an escape.

Am I nothing as they say,

Damn I need to get the hell away.

So to the camera room I go,

Like Jack Frost said, "I'm gonna let it snow"

Got out the camera room today

(The next day) do it my way,

Which turns out to be the hard way.

Loneliness, sighs of grief,

No way for my feelings to be released.

Stuck in the hole, laying in a grave.

Wondering is my life something worth trying to save.

ASIAN ISLANDER

There's a sense of urgency in this next writer's voice. And after we read his piece, we could see why. He gives many examples of why we should put the guns down, stop killing our own people, and start focusing that energy on a much bigger enemy. This enemy is probably the one who told you who your 'enemies' are now. What better way to stay clear of a revolution than to deter one's focus to another group. And what better group than the one that looks most like you. He says we should wake up, smell the coffee, and stop focusing our attention on people who are powerless when it comes to politics. The politicians are the ones passing all these laws. They're the ones that paint a horrific and violent image of us. And they do that as a way to relinquish responsibility from their own destructive ways. We have another political writer on the scene, so get ready to hear an opinion about what would make our government work. He's writing from Santa Clara County Jail in San Jose, CA.

(Chained In The Shadow Of Armed Revolution)

"Armed Not With Bullets But With Knowledge And Unity Greetings and highest revolutionary salutations. Once again we find ourselves in the crushing grip of this new swinish America. We can't get a 9 to 5 to feed the babies but we can always get detained and abused for revenue for our evil and backward city and county authorities. Well I can only really speak for my own evil backward city San Jose and county — Santa Clara "Avoid at all Costs, come for a visit stay for a 3rd strike." Who goes so far to censor the only positive means of expression of its incarcerated youth. And in County Jail we don't even get our own city newspaper because of an article that questions the Santa Clara counties' prosecution ethics.

Yes, as brother George S. Jackson R.I.P (Soledad Brother, Blood In My Eye) would say we are caught in the wheels of a fascist police state. We as felons cannot vote, why because our minds and views are dangerous "subversive to corporate organized crime in it's infiltration of our electoral process and media outlets." We cannot legally own a firearm in contradiction to the Constitution's 2nd amendment and the Declaration of Independence assurance we could forcibly restructure the government once it becomes corrupt and ceases to serve it's people.

Rescued German National socialists workers party members brought their hate and secret police policy to our once great nation. Our president was not elected but scooted in through massive republican and GOP influence. Our state governor is the son of an Austrian SA member. The extremely hard line racist enforcers of Hitler's home base. Also the mere scary branch of the Gestapo "Secret Police" and Shufen Shtafel Storm Troopers that inspired the inner structure of the CIA and the current Riot dress of our local police. Yes these are scary times 1984 has come and gone.

"Big Brother" the all seeing all knowing front of the super state is not even veiled. Peace activists are put on watch lists, generations of inner city youth are swept into a hungry beast to break down and demoralize the impoverished. Terrorists America once helped to train and finance to attack the Soviets were allowed to carry out the most blood thirsty attack on humanity "in a first world country" while under surveillance. In fact Israeli Intelligence agents were deported shortly before the attacks for getting too close to the ring leader Mohammed Atta, The Ultra Rich Bin Laden Family were whisked away despite a complete ground freeze of all American air craft.

You may ask yourself "why would the family of a notorious terrorist be allowed special freedom to flee before Osama was even implicated in the attack." The answer is money, both the president and his super crook C.I.A puppet master father have close business ties to both the Bin Laden's and the Saudi ruling family who reportedly could crumble America's economy if they pulled their money from U.S. banks. Also food for thought Bush Sr. was head of the C.I.A and would have ordered all assassinations during the Kennedy years. Kennedy angered many within the U.S anti-communist. Think tanks lay vowing to disband the CIA after the failed "Bay of Pigs" invasion of Cuba.

You may have the gut reaction of the United State's doesn't assassinate political figureheads. But clandestine and "failed" attempts were made on Fidel Castro, Maomar Kaddafi, and General Noreaga who mad punked us for coke

THE BEAT WITHOUT

Yes, what do we do when our own protectors are those we fear the most.

for missiles' money in Central America but successful hits we used to "destabilize" democratically elected leaders in Chile, El Salvador, the early 50's president of Vietnam, the president of Pre Saddam Iraq and perhaps the greatest revolutionary of our Era "Che" Guevara who after successfully ending the U.S. strangle hold of Cuba returned to Mexico and Central America to bring indigenous armed resistance to Guatemala. He was assassinated by CIA operatives after his capture and was defenseless suffering heavy bleeding from gun shot wounds to the lower extremities.

Other iffy situations that left little evidence other than who had the motivation and training to carry out perfect hits were the killings of Martin Luther King, Malcom X, Marilyn Monroe, the leadership of the Black Panther Party notably Huey P. Newton, George Jackson and both Kennedy boys. Music stars who gained too much pull Tupac Shakur, Kurt Cobain, Andre Hicks. Who all expressed distrust of the government and the need for intelligent opposition to the shadow government. The FBI are perhaps the worst of all they had a special committee to ruin the political careers of Black figure heads, the coke bust of D.C. Mayor Marion Berry, Tupac's allegations he was set up by an FBI snitch, Mike Tyson's rape conviction. Also put a shoot to kill order on all Black Panthers, the frame up of the leaders of the American Indian Movement. The smear campaign post firestorm at Wako.

Yes, what do we do when our own protectors are those we fear the most. Stay informed, talk to these who are of voting age about the need to counter the controlling elements of society. Question authority, funnel money back into neighborhood businesses and community groups. Stop killing each other over street corners while politicians have the last laugh. For many inner city youth higher education is not a goal, we end up in prison. The institutions hold rigid internal gang "movements" that urge education, respecting oneself and community and professionalism. But when we come home to return to drugs, guns, girls we devalue the struggle and cause we have vowed to uphold. When impoverished peoples divide and kill one another, we are our own worst enemy. Racial division is a key element in the socio economic foot on our necks. Next is gang tensions. Blacks killing blacks, Chicano's North, South divide is destroying the profound movements of the 1960's Bay Area. Think why would the government encourage the growth of the Bloods and Crips, Mexican Mafia and Nuestra Familia unless it was to cut the head off the awakening social pride and identities on college campuses across the U.S. It put an end to positive movements as the Black Panthers soup kitchens, American Indian outreach to impoverished youth, The Brown Berets and Cesar Chavez United Farm Workers.

As dedicated individuals we should take our fight for higher social standing, equality and better education, jobs, rights to the streets, schools, pulpits, and workplace. Educate the children, volunteer, start local workshops to spread job skills and knowledge of our elders. Soak up whatever education ideas and culture you can and flip it to create a new level to our peoples' struggle. Promote unity and practice life and let live. Let's take these gangs in return to the roots of solid, educated and dedicated revolution areas. The most effective revolution is the one of no gun shots, no bombs but within yourself first, your family next, then your block, 'hood, city, it keeps expanding until justice and accountability prevail. Don't let the movements of our parents and grand parents drift away. It is almost too late. But the mold is there. Remember Angela Davis went from wanted revolutionary for kidnapping and robbery to a professor at U.C. Santa Cruz. Whether Black, White, Cholo or Biker, we all want to be free like Dead Prez said, "Bang on the system."

Locked Up Far Away From Home

I bet you didn't know how alone you'd feel.
 Can't do what you want, now it's time to learn how to
 follow directions.
 Breakfast, lunch, and dinner at the depts discretion.
 Locked down, no using the phone tonight.
 I know how it feels to not be able to kiss your child
 goodnight.
 How it feels to not be able to unlock your own door and
 walk freely.
 So many different personalities at times they get on my
 nerves.
 It's like every move I make, I'm being watched.
 Orange clothes, other people draws, no thanks,
 I'll keep mind and wash them.
 A baby girl, hope you out there safe, no matter what
 I put you through you still stuck by my side.
 That's how I know you real. I love you Lisette.
 5-minute showers, county soap, are you for real.
 This ain't no place for me, I want better with my life.
 Wait, where am I going, I was getting comfortable where
 I was at.
 Never been here before, I need to get out.
 Jail — this is a place a person will really get to know
 themselves.
 I don't wish jail, prison, or anything that has to do with
 being away from your family.
 On anyone. If it happens to you,
 Please use your time wisely and educate yourself.
 Find out who you really are. What your race is about.
 To all locked up far away from home.
 Hold your head high, never let them see you stress.
 They can make your time hard, and they can give you
 time, but one thing they can't do is stop the time.
 The time will keep on ticking and the world will keep
 on spinning.

CHAMP So close, yet so far... This next writer Champ aka Anthony Romprey is writing from our backyard — San Bruno, CA. He's at 850 (San Francisco County Jail) and we can see he's putting his brain to work while there. And you'll see too as you probe the brain of Champ. He starts off with a letter about how inspired he is by The Beat and its writers. Then he goes into a brilliant piece about being locked up away from home. He sarcastically starts off by saying 'I bet you didn't know how alone you'd feel.' Damn, that opening line alone is powerful. He also gave us a piece dedicated to his homies, but we don't usually publish those pieces that shout them out without teaching us anything anymore. He closes with a piece about his perspective of love. And from what we've experienced, he's not too far off...

Dear Beat

First off, allow me to take this golden opportunity to embrace and send a big "hello" to you and yours. Keep doing what y'all doing you know I'd expect nothing less. What's up Beat. Well this is the second time I wrote y'all this weekend. The first time was some scribble and scratch so I crumbled that up and threw it away. Now this time I put more thought and effort into these pieces.

Writing to y'all makes me feel like I'm not in this horrible place. Thanks for being an ear when I need to talk to someone. I'm still in S.F County Jail — 850 — so big ups to The Beat and all the writers, very deep writings in this booklet. Thanks for sending two copies of issue 11.19 my way. So I'ma slide on back with nothing but respect. Shouts out to Omar

Sorry for mistakes enclosed are three pieces "locked up, far away from home" "I miss my homies", and then a piece I wrote in March about "love". Enjoy Beat. Hope to see my writings published very soon.

Writing to y'all makes me feel like I'm not in this horrible place.
 Thanks for being an ear when I need to talk to someone.

SALVADOR Losing any family member can be very painful, but losing two in less than two months is excruciating. This next writer came to somewhat of an epiphany when he decided to give his life over to God. And if that's what it takes for him to keep his cool in these dark times, then we're happy he decided to do that. He's writing from Kern Valley State Prison in Delano, CA, and we admire the strength it takes for him to write about an experience that's so difficult to deal with. Thank you for sharing this with us and we hope you can continue to keep your head up in times of adversity.

As I Sit

As I sit in my cell I wonder why I failed so miserably out there when I had my freedom and freedom of speech!! Maybe it's because I didn't have the right joy of a beautiful woman by my side. Who could have opened my eyes up to my troubled ways in life? I've been in and out since my teenage years. I'm from down south — LA. I always hated the color red; but now I love it because red means the blood of Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins.

I lost my little sister due to gang violence on 4/20/05 then I lost my dad on 6/5/05 due to health concerns. I thank God for being there for me, 'cause if it wasn't for him I probably wouldn't be around right now. He's giving a lot of hope and faith to be forgiven we must forgive them, who do wrong to us. God's good and he loves you too he wants you to know that. Send me some drawings if you can ok! Take care.

Love

To me, there is no such meaning of love. It's the most commonly used word to express the relationship between two individuals who might not know another word to express their feelings, so they say I love you. "Love is evil," love doesn't turn away from you when you are knocking at the heart's artery/door. It happily opens itself up. "Love" can be played with like the strings to a puppet. How can you tell when you're in love when the actions you express towards your significant other are jealousy, anger, pain? Then you say you're in love?

One thing I've noticed about relationships is that when you search for love you look in all the wrong places. But when you least expect it, it suddenly appears right in front of your face. I've felt love once before and I do know from experience that love hurts.

What is love to you? To me, love means you'll never give up on your significant other no matter where the two of you might be, how far away from each other you two are. No matter what, love does not come and go. It stays with you forever. Love does not leave you stranded in a time of hardship. Love does not turn its back on you. Love has to be flowing in the river of blood amongst two individuals in order to be in love. It just can't be in one person and not the other. It will not work out.

When I say "I love," I mean beauty, friendship, happiness, loyalty, honesty, and caring about the one I loves well-being. I hope to feel love again and give as well. Until then I will still question what love is!

JAMES This next writer is in a Juvenile Hall south of San Francisco fighting a very serious case. He has a sign on his cell door that boldly says, "Do not talk to this minor." But with a mind like his communication should be constant, so here's his communication to the rest of us — the ones that can't talk to him — the ones who probably would have his best interest at heart. In his latest masterpiece, he personifies feelings and ideas that we have to deal with everyday. However, when he deals with them it's an act of survival because right now he's in a focal point in his life that could either make him or break him. It's a tragedy that we undermine kids as kids until they commit a crime and we punish them the same way we would an adult. Or as a matter of fact worse than we would if they were an adult. A child facing life sentences is worse off than an adult facing life sentences because the child hasn't even lived their life yet. But in facing all of this, James is still mustering up the energy to analyze where he went wrong and how he can understand the situation better. He's one courageous person and you'll see why if you choose to read on. Great piece James and no matter how hard they try to silence you with such draconian signs as the one on your cell door, just know The Beat will always encourage you to communicate with us however you can. You will always have a place in The Beat's heart.

With time but only with time, something will go wrong with all the homies, and they will sick their weird tio, Sadness on you. This one's no better than the other ones — if anything worse because all he really succeeds in doing is making you feel like he carved out your insides with an ice cream scooper; makes you feel as though your corazon's (heart) been on fire for centuries.

A Spiritual Castration

Someone, please help me find a way to express this pent-up frustration. Frustrated at wondering if I'll ever get out, and having to live through this spiritual castration.

I was thrown many obstacles in this life of mine, and every time, I just seemed to make the situation worse. Wondering what happened to the days happiness would come more often. And in the back of my mind was the worry of falling to this curse.

I know I'm responsible for the way my life turned out, but I can't lie, it would be nice to have someone else to blame — to blame for a mistake that me, myself, and I made, one that just won't let my life ever be the same.

Why is it that I'm not an adult in the free world, but yet in here I'm old enough to be given a double life sentence? What got me to the point where I would see my poor mother's tears and I wouldn't even feel no type of repentance? For these questions, I will deep down inside always know the truth, but I'd really rather avoid the sad answer.

I had an okay thing with that female better known as Liberty. But my stupidity made me go and change her. What really amazes me, though, is how I unconsciously so smoothly slipped into this life of hate and crime. From wondering how it was to be locked up within these walls, to sitting here patiently waiting to be given my hard time.

I find myself trying to wear a happy mask for my son, but as time goes on, I must admit that it's just getting harder. Every time he tells me, "Papi, come on, let's go home," it seems the light is only getting more and more farther away. Desperately waiting to go home with him, but I wonder in the future will he still feel the same. A baby is a being who speaks from the heart, and a man has a whole different mind frame. It's sad having to wonder if the person you'd die a million deaths for is going to grow up to resent you — resent me for having put my gang before him, and for all the suffering my actions made him go through.

Hopefully when he grows up he won't be like me, set good goals for himself with positive determination. Avoid this path that I jumped on, because all your getting is a promised to be keep up and a slow excruciating spiritual castration...

Those Unsung Homies

Damn, it trips me out how the homie Stupidity is always present. He's there with you all day, every day. Even on a church day. Most of the time you'll catch him posting up with his carnalito, Ignorance. These two brothers get along so well, that it's truly hard to believe. They'll both get in your mente and spin you up into doing irrational decisions.

I don't know if you've met their baby primito, Anger yet, and let me just say, bro, if you haven't, then don't. These foo's got a little juego (game) they play where Anger will pump you up into doing something, and Stupidity will just assure you that its firm. Don't even trip. And here comes Ignorance breaking it down to you, that what you're about to do is right because the other person "played you."

After a while, if they like you and they see you won't abandon them, they'll introduce you to they're beautiful distant but close cousin, Violence. This jaina is as lovely as can be. The way she would help you take care of your problems was just magic in itself. If she thinks you're serious and not afraid to commit, here comes her uncle, Impulse. This vato will have you reacting so fast, you won't even see Violence hasta que (until) she's walking away with a satisfied smile on her face after being allowed to assist you in another one of your oh-so-many problems.

But then here comes the locked doors and brick walls, and now the homies mentioned earlier are dominating mostly your every thought. But all they're succeeding in is helping you get yourself deeper and deeper. With time but only with time, something will go wrong with all the homies, and they will sick their weird tio, Sadness on you. This one's no better than the other ones — if anything worse because all he really succeeds in doing is making you feel like he carved out your insides with an ice cream scooper; makes you feel as though your corazon's (heart) been on fire for centuries.

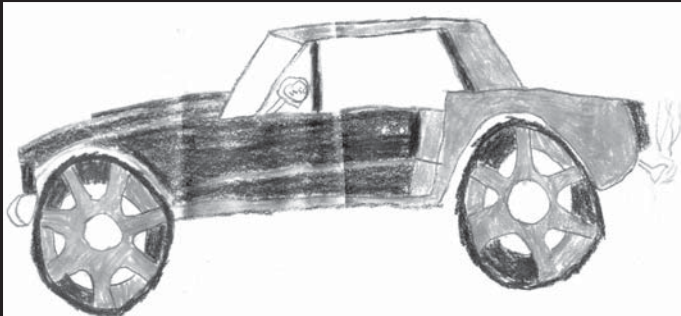
One day after being with Tio Tristeza (Uncle Sadness) all day, you hear someone knocking on the front door, and who else can it be but his brother, Despair, who is a lightweight hermit, and who chose to hold off on meeting you 'til he seen his carnalito was loving it.

Despair... Damn, what can I say about Despair? That like all the other homies, he's there more than enough, and he will accomplish in having you thinking why are you on this mundo (world) anyways? He'll accomplish in having you wondering how you're gonna get through your days hasta que te llevan pa visitar el abuelito de ello's que se llama (until they take you to visit the grandfather of all these homies named) Reality. This viejo (old man) will have you in his hands for the rest of your life, once he opens your eyes with a bucket of cold agua (water). He'll be there for you siempre (always) to wake you up, to put you to bed... for everything he's there. It's funny though because once you meet him, he just won't seem to go away.

Why is it that I'm not an adult in
the free world, but yet in here
I'm old enough to be given a
double life sentence?

Reality Is

Reality is... twenty-two, three-thousand pound bombs
dropping from the sky,
Reality is... the tears while she prays you'll survive
another night,
Reality is... the fear of being caught by the red and blue
lights,
Reality is... your grindin' just to rock the hundred and
fifty dollar Nikes,
Reality is... private exotic hotels that cost four
thousand dollars a night,
Reality is... a mother and two kids keepin' warm by a
trash can fire
Reality is... some of the tombstones in the graveyard
are your homies,
Reality is... the only way to get out of education class
in prison is to get your GED.
Reality is... you're flamed up or you're draped down,
Reality is... you're from a turf or a side of your town,
Reality is... when you look in the mirror you wonder,
"What happened to me?"
Reality is... you're not a bad person; you just abide by
the codes of the street,
Reality is... we tend to take it to the extreme,
Reality is... reality is my abstract poem your reading.



Beat Without

Top of the morning, I hope this finds you well. I been working on a few poems, two of them are from earlier dates, I just tucked them away feel me, I started them then lost interest or what not, then I pep them today and they look alright, just a little polish to bring them to life, or something like that.

This is a cold ass world you know, I was flipping through the pages of Revolution, a radical newspaper I get, and I came across this article on Nepal. They been fighting a civil war since 1996, I believe the Maoist against the government, and this 15 year old girl is talking to a reporter, and she talks about her sister being kidnapped and took to India to be a prostitute that's why she's fighting she says, to end the way things are.

Things just irk me sometimes. I have a lot of patience and understanding but we live in a twisted world and I wish things like that didn't happen but they do. So much crazy shhh happens everyday all around the world, just another day. I've been told that I'm a dreamer at times, I guess most who believe a change is possible must be, to be able to envision something better than the present.

I be trying to keep up with your weekly discussion, but by the time I get the publication and blast something out, it's already in motion, feel me? I just wanted to slide a few more pieces, I'll be with my nose in a book soon, I will receive my next two college courses this week, they will occupy a lot of my day. Keep up the good work, every time I think of your workshop I think of the Keebler Elf Treehouse lil' workers packaging cookies off the assembly line, but instead of cookies and elves, grown ups and Beat publications. It's a lot of work and constant moving in my mind's eye, take care.

In solidarity,

SINFUL

There are a whole lot of people out here that actually believe we enjoy violence. There are also people out here that feel like we're satisfied with selling drugs in our community. And even people that feel like we want to glorify gang activity for the rest of our lives. Well, those are all stereotypes that cause harm to us because they give people a negative idea of who we are before they even meet us. These stereotypes bring up tension that wouldn't normally be there if they really knew what we yearn for. This next writer, who's an outstanding poet and has been writing for The Beat for quite some time now, is writing from New Folsom State Prison in Represa, CA. He sends us a letter along with three poems, our favorite being his last, "My Sanctum." In this poem he breaks down those stereotypes talked about earlier. All he wants is the world to be a better place. And just thinking about the idea makes him feel better even though he knows the world is a far cry from where it should be... A great and loyal Beat writer so please read on and give this man the respect he deserves...

What It Is

It's this pain deep down inside,
It's in these long ass lonely nights
It's the courage to step up and continue the fight
I kick the fence
Forget it, bust it I won't cry, my rage
I won't disguise,
It could only be better in the sky.
How long has it been??
7 years, since 99,
7 years since I seen my mother smile
7 years since I had my b-m moan my name
Damn, I miss my life!!
Will... it ... ever... end...?
The gates will open up in time
But the memories remain entrenched in my mind
All I can do is sharpen and fortify my mind
And take it one day at a time

My Sanctum

As the sun sinks into the red/orange clouds,
My sanctum is not far away
When I unroll my mattress and kick my Reeboks off,
That's the best part of my day
My imagination paints my utopia, a peaceful world from
sea to sea,
Not a happy go lucky storybook ending, just tranquility
and harmony
Between nations and creeds
A world free of toxic wastes in the ocean, pollution in the
air
No more stumps where whole forests are obsolete and no
longer there
A world where everybody as a roof over their head
And proper food to eat
And equal opportunity at life
And motivation to reach for their dreams,
A world without wars, without Bush and Blair and
religious war mongers
A world without diseases, without disasters and
destruction against one another
A place where children don't have to learn to march and
shoot a rifle,
Before they learn how to read
A place where lil' girls are not sold or kidnapped and
forced into sexual slavery
No sweatshops or crooked cops, these injustices just ain't
seen
No empty shells and outlined chalk, no tombstones
reading
Rest in Peace!!
No unholy priests, no demented weirdos roaming the
streets
Just a peace of mind, and safe passage
No lost souls, no profound pain
My notion of a better world,
Is my sanctum at the end of the day.

SAM CAPERS We think Beat readers will like the fact that Sammy Caps — Sam Capers — will be interspersing his autobiographical pieces ("Mad Dog") with his more traditional pieces (like those below) in which he confronts the issues on his mind at the time. And while he promises to drop a "Mad Dog" piece every couple of weeks, we're not sure we can keep up with that pace. (One thing about being on death row... you have a lot of time on your hands.) Paying tribute to Beat writer (Meen) for thinking beyond himself and beyond today — and using a prison friendship between man and animal — Sam makes the point in "Realizing The Real" that too often we allow others to determine our moods and our actions, when we must learn to rely on ourselves. In the two poems, "It's So Hard To Let Up" and "Maybe," the man confined on San Quentin's Death Row remembers sweet memories from the past and plays with the possibility of a hopeful future — the dreams of prisoners everywhere.

Realizing The Real: Dedicated to Meen

In a past issue, I read a piece written by Meen, and after what was told to me by the Editor, Meen has been making much progress. My apologies to him as well as The Beat for flashin' like I did. Really, it's the fact that so many youngins are being elected to be permanent residents of California's Department of Corrections. I was told that an eighteen-year-old "baby" is on his way up here to the Row. I'm hotta than fish in grease over this issue.

For the ones, such as yourself Meen, who still have a chance to do it right, do that shhh moving without looking back. This piece is for you, lil' homie...

In 1997, sittin' in the Cypress Section at Chino State Prison, my mind was goin' crazy. Damn my freakin' jaina! That woman needed to be tied to a bumper of a truck, drug through glass and dropped into a pool of alcohol! Arrhhhh! Say, Homie, Sammy was hella drove. My anger had the best of me, had to find a victim. Rippin' open my mattress and pulling out a nice piece of 12-inch Plexiglas, 12 long and 3 wide, at a deadly dagger-sharpened tip. "Somebody has to pay for my pain." In the morning when the gates open, it's on and crackin'.

That night, after the lights out roll call, I took a bennie to help me sleep. My Ol' Lady's photos (or should I say "ex-Ol' Lady") were torn up and floatin' in the toilet.

Jennifer had been my world. We were close in a crazy kind of way. She was in and out of the system as well as me. Maybe it was all that we had in common is what made us damn compatible. Ever hear of the sayin' "Too good to be true"? That's what was doin' down. Come to think of it, we was foolin' ourselves. We hit licks together, put in a gang of work together. As tough as nails, modern-day Bonnie she was to me, as I was her Clyde. Then, out of nowhere, poof! She was gone!

She was petite like Jessica Alba, but had that Michelle Rodriguez persona. A gangsta's true boo. Light hazel green eyes, long dark brown hair with blonde highlights and boooo-tee! She was my queen. She had devoted herself to me. still, she did me hella dirty. She teamed up with a whole different crew and ended up in Los Angeles County jail for triple murder. She was supposed to wait for me. I had 28 days and a wake up to parole. My petty ass four-month violation for a damn blunt roach, of all things, was damn near up. It was a hop, skip and jump to my touch down. Spensa, but this one had me hot, hot, hot!

Yet, I loved her and lost her!

OK, that night I had found out, something in my head clicked. "That's it," I said to myself. I can't do this any more." Then bennie took me to visit Ol' Mista Sandman. Buenas noches!

Waking up out of a trippy-ass dream, it was a sound that brought me back to the pain and feelings of betrayal. It was a "sss-sss-crunch, crinkle" noise. And coming from under my cama! What the...? Looking under, I realized that it had to have been a mouse or rat all up in canteen. So, kickin' myself in the ass for not hangin' my bags on the bars of my cell door, my mind was on how to get rid of that unwanted lil' thing.

Turning on my cell light, I just got on my hands and knees slowly approaching the rustling sound that seemed to have no intentions of stopping. The bag in the very front seemed to be the source. That lil' bastard was in my Debbie snack bag! I flicked my Bic lighter tryin' to scare off my unwanted intruder. Then I moved the bag. A big-ass lizard opens his mouth, hisses and snaps at me!

Now, let's not forget folks that half of my body is stuck under a bunk, and the only way out was reverse, a gear that cannot be found in a state of panic. The lizard came at me with a Nutty Bar Chocolate on his nose. The bastard had the nerve to get pissed at ME for bothering HIM in MY HOUSE!

Then wham! I tried to get up. Remember now, there's a bunk above me. Without using that damn reverse gear, there were pink elephants, purple horses, stars and planets that NASA has yet to discover floatin' in my head. It so happens (you can stop laughing now) that the C.O. was two cells down when I hit or smacked my head under the bunk.

"What the hell?" said the guard. "You man down?"

"Man, shut up and get up off my door," I whined. He started bustin' up and goes: "What happened, Capers?"

I growled, "Man, nada! Just get a exterminator up here, OK?"

"We did," he continued, "but it did nothing to control anything." He walked away laughing.

The next night, I hung my bags up on the bars, but about the same time as the night before. Thing is, it seemed that no matter how hard I tried and no matter what I did, it didn't help.

After a while, I expected the lil' lizard to visit. And for some reason, the night I was thinkin' about killin' somebody, that lil' lizard — Cam-Cam, I named him — saved two lives, mine and that vato of my choice who just gave me a small reason to book the shhh out of her ass!

I began puttin' food out for Cam-Cam, and he would come out of nowhere 'bout the same time every night and eat. Then one day (like three weeks after my parole date... I caught six more months), or night I should say, I put some broken raspberry short bread cookies, his favorite, in the palm of my hand. He crept up lil' by lil' with fast jerky movements. He'd grab a piece and bold toward the back wall. I'd lay still as night and watch him eat. He would dash back and repeat the same until the food was gone, run toward the front f the cell, turn, look at me, lick his lips and disappear out on tier.

Finally, ridiculous as it may sound, I began to become attached to my new lil' friend. We had a bond that only Cam-Cam and me could understand. Man and reptile! Crazy, huh?

It was about 1:30 p.m. and the yard had just let out. I stayed behind packin' they were transferring me to Soledad that Monday. It was Friday when Cam-Cam decided to show up in mid daylight.

"Either you're one dumb lizard, or a brave lil' homie to be walkin' around Chino in mid daylight, Cams. What's up lil' buddy? I had asked him.

He looked up at me. I could tell that he knew I was leaving. Going into my bag, I brought out a cookie (his personal bag, smile) and put one in my hand. This time, he hopped on my hand and stayed as he ate. The sudden change in my lil' buddy's trust was no surprise to me. after he ate, he posted up on my shoulder. That evening, I made a lil' bed, actually a nice big bed, for him out of some mattress stuffing and a Top Ramen box. Yet, every night that weekend, I awoke with him on my bed crashed out cold, lil' rascal that he was.

On early Monday morning, I was awakened about 3:30. as usually, Cam-Cam was next to me. but it was different this time around. Cams didn't move. I gently picked him up and stroked my friend's head with sadness in my heart. My lil' buddy passed away because of the pain he felt of losing the only human he trusted. I wrapped him in a piece of mattress cotton, and tied a cloth around that. I emptied a bag of raspberry short bread cookies and respectfully put him inside, leaving two cookies in the bag. I resealed the bag, took apart my light and laid my friend to rest. I broke the screws so nobody could open the cover unless it was a jackhammer.

When my gate slid open, I took one last look at my light and smiled. The CO thought I was burnt the hell out. Maybe I am. But I will do everything and be anything to remain faithful to a true friend.

You may be thinking, "Okay, what about Ol' Girl?" Okay, this is the moral to this story. Us as humans are not perfect. Jennifer was not perfect. She let me down. She hurt me bad. The pain inflicted by her to my heart killed a part, a big part of me. it's the same that I did to Cam-Cam. I hurt my lil'

buddy and it damn did kill him. In a nutshell.

We cannot rely on other people. People come and go, especially here in this correctional system. Men and women with significant time spent behind bars try hard to reach out to whoever or whatever we feel can make things better.

I had Cam-Cam; Dwight Abbott had "Warden," and many others have the homie, barrio, block or 'hood to rely on. But what good are they when not one can satisfy that insatiable need we strive so hard to satisfy?

The answer: we have to believe in ourselves. Trust in ourselves. Do for ourselves. Only "you" can accomplish the goals you shoot for. Our jainas or nobody else can do it for us. We have to do it! Support is fine, but beware of the haters. Your best friend can be your worst enemy, and your worst enemy could become your best friend. Don't rely on anybody who's just as imperfect as you!

Folks, I'm tired. I'm burned out and, sadly, have found a long-term retirement plan here in the Q. just because a many stays up out of the funk, and ain't into riding with the

SAM CAPERS (CONT.)

fellas, doesn't make him a punk, rat or whatever others may view him or her as.

Sixteen years in this system has finally brought me to the realization that I was messin' up bad. I destroyed families, homes, and spread the pain and havoc that continues out on the streets at this very moment. The gangs and violence will not end. Ever! The truth of the matter is, I will outright refuse to be a part of that destruction any longer.

Meen, you're right. I don't and won't bow down to the law. But I will give back the respect they give me. I'm still the convict and they still the police. I'm proud of you, lil' homie. Break up out this concrete and iron box, and to hell what they think about you! You know what and who you are. That's all that matter.

Realizing the real! Peace out!

Your best friend can be your worst enemy, and your worst enemy could become your best friend. Don't rely on anybody who's just as imperfect as you!

It's So Hard To Let Up

My life is filled with pain
Grey clouds scattered across the sky
Staring through these cell bars
Tattoo teardrops upon my eyes

The bay side I hear is peaceful
A beautiful visual shot out to sea
They ask what I wanna do before I die
I tell them, "Nothing, except be me."

My mind drifts with heady visions
And heart tinged with a lonely haze
Nights a cold and desperate, man
With real tears upon my face

All I want is to hold you
To keep you from harm and life's pain untold
It's so true when other convicts say
"It's so hard to let go"

The softness of your lips, my love
Oh, the sweet nectar of your tongue
How we frolicked through the ocean surf
Tenderly free-spirited and real young

Both knowin' home was with us
A blessing sent from up above
Two lost souls joined as one
Full of so much love

Now you're gone far away
Not even saying good-bye
Where is it that I went wrong?
Why was everything so wrong I thought right?

Alls I need is an angel
Someone to call my Baby Boo
Cute and precious and friskie as hell
Wishing my angel that it was you

See, all I want is to hold you
To keep you from harm and life's pain untold
It's so true when other convicts say
"It's so hard to let go..."

What's Up, Beat?

Yeah, it's me once again puttin' it down for the week. My time spent with y'all is time worth spending. Gots my coffee, cheese puffs, and pens, paper, and last but not least, what's in my heart.

What it is weighing heavily on my chest, everybody needs somebody. As long as we don't really too much on them. Ya dig what I'm saying?

This week, I didn't hit you with more of my story starring "Mad Dog" due to the fact that, well, truthfully, I'm not on that page. So, to make it a lil' bit more interesting, I'm going to hit ya with the next part every two weeks so I can submit other pieces. Too much of one thang gets old. And if you can't deal with it, then sue me! (smile)

OK, it's time to put shots out. Okay, to Mimi from Drew Carey, you are fine... No, wait! I'm messing up! Ha ha! My bad (LOL). Nah, for reals, a big shout out from my heart to everybody there at The Beat, all the new and veteran BWO writers, my distant friends at the SF Juvenile Hall max unit, lil' homie Meen — keep up the good work! A special holla out to all my pandas here in the Q and on the Row. To Friskie, I really dig ya poems. I'm feelin' 'em. To an old buddy I departed with while in West Valley Detention Center and BWO veteran Eugene Weems, I wish you well, and may Allah keep you in His favor. A Salaam Alaikum.

To the regular contributors of BWO, I need assistance obtaining an English-Arabic Qur'an. If you have any direct resources, please forward them to The Beat Within. I am also looking for information on pen pal services. Someplace to where I can meet new friends.

Until next time...

Maybe

Maybe:
I'll someday go home
And walk off the row

Maybe:
I'll someday go buy a coke
In the wee morning hours at an AM/PM store

Maybe:
I'll someday walk on the beach
And enjoy a cold juicy peach

Maybe:
I'll someday spend holidays with family
And take the kids out on Halloween

Maybe:
I'll someday fall in love
With a stranger, friend or angel above

Maybe...

BROTHA ACHIM

One of our newest and most political writers is back in our pages again and it's a pleasure to have him here. He always gives us more than a little bit to think about and this week is no different. He hits us with several pieces, one of which we took out because even though we agree with most of the things he's saying, we also know that if we don't let one group make generalizations about another group, we have to be universal in that rule. For instance, if we published a piece from a white man about how evil black people are, we couldn't bring ourselves to cut a piece from a black man describing how evil white people are. People's opinions are their own regardless if The Beat exists or not, we're just here to give a voice to those who don't normally have one without offending too many people. But anyhow, that's a whole other discussion in itself. Let's talk about the writing sent to us from the State Prison Correctional Training Facility in Soledad, CA. He makes very controversial points about our government and the people who run it. One thing's for certain, more people of color are locked up than anyone else. And that's a contradiction to truth, justice, and you know what else. All this 'brotha' is doing is calling people on their mistakes. And he has every right to, since he's been made to suffer a horrible consequence for a mistake he made. He's a true teacher and wisdom seeps from these pages whenever he's featured. Let us know what you think...

Zoo Prison

Enslavement of humans behind walls and electrified razor wire fences is insidiously barbaric. This is not the way to treat or transform a person, this will only deform, perverse and harden his or her humanity. It was discovered very early on if you want to dominate an individual, then destroy his dignity and he'll feel weak, guilty and unworthy... And the best way to destroy his dignity is to cause him to fight against himself if you fight with yourself you are unwittingly dividing yourself with true person. You are becoming split — you are willing to entering into the world of schizophrenia. You are becoming ill and diseased. Just your energies will be dissipated, you will become weak. Imagine your left hand fighting with your right, neither will win.

You cannot win against yourself, so you will begin to feel trapped, condemned and so unworthy that you will be willing to bow down to any stupid person. Anybody who is a good pretender, a hypocrite, this is how cunning people have learned to dominate the humanity of others.

Prison zoo keeper — the keeper of man — the lowest of the lowest. Some prison guards have become especially adept with causing self-debasement of those whom they see being paid and entrusted to care for. They have found such subtle ways of allowing a person to humiliate and self-destruct, that they don't even come into the picture at all. Left alone, uneducated, abandoned, ostracized and enduring psychological warfare, many prisoners will abuse, humiliate and destroy themselves.

We live in a moment of history where our technological/evolutionary advances are so speeded up that we can only begin to see the present when it has become the dead past. Our realities are so "surreal," that it can only be seen in light of still truth, it's beauty seemingly a lie. Moreover our lives are illusionary, nightmarish, reflecting mostly the pain and decay around and without us.

Black Role Model

To model what role in a dominant privileged white culture? That of the neurotic Uncle Tom, the good black, the survivor, who goes along to get along. For there to be a paradigm black role model, these must be dignified role with American for black role model.

It was discovered very early on if you want to dominate an individual, then destroy his dignity and he'll feel weak, guilty and unworthy... And the best way to destroy his dignity is to cause him to fight against himself if you fight with yourself you are unwittingly dividing yourself with true person.

Alienation

We are all alienated from our authentic self and true possibilities. No matter what cultural, social-economic class or nation we belong to. This basic myopia-vision prevents us from taking any unequivocal view of our own insanity or the madness of others, our alienation goes to the very root cause of our dysfunctional and decadent society.

Around us are all pseudo-events to which we identify and adjust with a fake sense consciousness adapted to view these events as true and real. In our society truth resides less in what we are and more in what we are not. We live in a moment of history where our technological/evolutionary advances are so speeded up that we can only begin to see the present when it has become the dead past. Our realities are so "surreal," that it can only be seen in light of still truth, it's beauty seemingly a lie. Moreover our lives are illusionary, nightmarish, reflecting mostly the pain and decay around and without us. Our lives are mostly ill-grounded and superficially guided by our greed, ego and need for pleasure. We either fabricate triumph in our songs and history or set forth unrealistic goals in our religious dictums.

What is, is described in the light of what is not, already dim by the shadows of the past. At most events we are as bemused, confused creatures, more strangers to ourselves than to another. Even from an idea standpoint there is only a glimpse of our true selves.

We are born in a world where alienation awaits. We are potential human beings in an unnatural state. Our present destiny has been achieved by our own greed and selfishness, cruel and outrageous violence that we have perpetrated against each other.

Nevertheless, the requirements of the presence, as depicted by the failures of the past are to provide a thorough introspective of critical examination of our activities, failures, and accomplishments.

Unfortunately, we can only begin to realize, except from this dysfunctional beginning point... The recognition of this neurosis is the spring board of any serious contemplation on any aspects of our present intra-human relationships.

However, what is required is more than just a passionate outcry of outraged humanity, rather an in depth understanding of how "our" greed, fears, and selfishness has alienated us from our true selves! If we are to achieve our natural selves and true possibilities.

Native African Americans Wake Up!

"You are ashamed of us." The issues of
Prison and the fact that over five-hundred
Thousand black men (mostly young) are
In prison, enslaved by mostly white-men;
Whose raison d'être is to genocide the black man.

Whose raw-hatred, pattern and
Practice of psychological rape and
Harassment is causing havoc upon the
Psyche of the black prisoners.

The physical violence and torture
Imposed upon the black man, by the white
Man, makes his slave holding ancestors
Seem pale by comparison.

But, you don't hear me, because,
You aren't listening.

You seem to forget that whatever
We've done (inter alias, having
Ineffectively dealt with racism and the
Other maladies that plague afro
Americans) and whatever we've become,
We are still human beings, members of
Your family...

We (black prisoners) have been
Abandoned, banished and disenfranchised

Without representation. It is utterly
Immoral for you to continue to rationalize

Your cowardly "silence," by the jaded
Statement in "your" Uncle Tom voices:
"You committed the crime, so you deserve
What you get."

And so have the criminals with
Badges, our keepers (prison guards),
Those in the state house and the
Whitehouse; and mostly everyone else who
Has ever drawn a breath.

Woe to you!

It is time we all grew up and quit
Hiding behind: 1). Frivolous rituals; 2).

Dead traditions; 3). Pseudo-normalcy

And accept "our" reality, that
Everything isn't ok

Let us join together and work to
Free "our" Brothers and Sisters being

Held "unjustly" in slavery in
America's Commercial Neo
Concentration Camps.

And for those who are guilty, let
"us" demand humane treatment and
Justice.

Cowardice

It's who is above the age of reasoning, who forgives the
transgressions of his "true enemy" is a coward. Forgiveness
is never the right thing to do, it is always a way out, a
weakness and a character flaw you know it and so does your
enemy. It's who forgives/forgets and turns his alertness away
will most certainly live to regret it — becoming his enemy's
prey

Universal law commands you neither to forget nor to
forgive. Forgiveness will never beget forgiveness. The history
of mankind is a glaring reminder of that truism your enemy
well recognizes your forgiveness as no more than a sign of
weakness and your failure to stay the course. And as soon
as you forget, your enemy has a duty to unmercifully strike
a coupe de grace — to reaffirm universal law "that only the
strong survive to feed off the weak."

Commentary (1): in an inescapable perilous situation
— do not expand your energies running away when you have
no idea as to where you need to run. The odds favor he who
stands and fights even in the most dangerous of situations.
Even if that were so, it is better suffer defeat standing than
defeat running away.

Kindred Spirits

Hot, dry and dusty
We live, breathe
And feel the heat
Toes trying on the sidewalk
Sweaty and tired

Swamp cooler un-cool
a/c on the blink
electric bill — outrageous
car's hot and overheating

we threaten to move away
to sure distant northern state
of cool casual changes
and then the still coolness
on high approaches with the
desert's peacefulness —
of majestic sunsets and
shaded sanctuaries of
places to cool down

the night reveals with
exquisite clarity the naked
beauty of
celestial bodies

bring back the
remembrance
of the reasons this unique breed
of kindred spirits have
fallen deeply w/ love

with our lives and
homes w/ the
land of the sun

why we feel this
inescapable loyalty to this

place we call...
Arizona

Universal law commands
you neither to forget nor
to forgive. Forgiveness will
never beget forgiveness.

MALACHI This next young writer is a natural born educator, for though he openly makes mistakes in his own life, he still finds time to teach us with blunt honesty. Writing from the Glen Mills School in Concordville, Pennsylvania, he gives us three scorches. We first met this bright young man in our workshops in the Youth Guidance Center (San Francisco County Juvenile Hall) and now he's obviously growing over there in PA. He teaches us about his take on getting money the fast way. Then he goes on to boldly give us the truth in the saying 'live by the gun, die by the gun.' And finally he concludes it with why we should all practice being leaders instead of followers. Tell us what you think...

Don't Follow, Just Lead

What it do Beat? This should be a topic for The Beat Within — being a follower! My grandmother always told me, "If you're going to be an Indian be the chief" I find myself everyday leading, sometime I lead negative things (but I'm working on it) the majority of the time I'm leading positive because I'm a role model.

What I got for these kids is just because you see somebody doing something wrong, that doesn't mean that you have to do it, regardless of yo' age if you start at a young age leading, then when you hit 18, 19, 20 years old you won't have to worry about being a follower, because you'll be leading by example. I'm a king, because I take control of every situation that I find myself in, and it's not because I followed somebody else into self destruction I led myself there nobody but myself, so what I got: lead don't follow!!

Live By The Gun Die By It Too

In the Bible it says "live by the sword die by the sword!" But on the streets of San Francisco all it is every night is gun play. Not only in my city but everywhere the shhh is worldwide. But like the old folks say, "the good die young, and only the strong survive!" Rest in Paradise my fallen friends! We lost a lot of people in the streets especially by the boom, boom of a gun, and I'm not just speakin' fo' myself, I'm talking about people all over the country.

I was raised and grew up on the San Francisco streets of Hunters Point, it has been crazy, but I love where I'm from and wouldn't trade it for the world, but I done been to too many funerals, and since I have been locked up I got too

many phone calls, now my heart is in agony and pain, I got a brother and a cousin that's down, one is in max unit (my old unit) love you Al-Bundy, and the other is at Log Cabin Ranch School, Lil' Ant be strong you will be out of there.

Everybody say having a gun is a must "for protection" but the majority of the people who get them, only get them for fashion statements to say or to look cool that is plain ridiculous if you ask me, if you gon' have a hoo-wop (gun) bust it, but also know that there will be major consequences and majority of the time they are fatal, so for the lil' boys and girls too because out of nowhere, they want to do what is designed for a man, well "live by the gun die in the street like a dog by the gun!"

BABY GIRL Have you ever heard the term, "A diamond in the ruff?" Well, that's what this next poet is. We first met her in our workshops in the East Palo Alto Charter School and even then she was unforgettable. Now, she's going through some things at her new high school and continually corresponds with one of our editors via email. She really needs support and we would appreciate some words of inspiration for her. Again, she's started at a new high school and people are giving her a hard time. And though we can't be there with her every minute to counter all the attacks she's had on her character, we would love to. Keep your head up and stay as strong as you can. And if you need a shoulder to lean on, The Beat has plenty extra to spare. She's writing as a free woman going to high school in East Palo Alto.

Talk, Talk

Talk, talk
 Yak, yak
 Blah, blah
 Shut up and stop talking all day long
 Voices yapping in my ear
 Angry voices tell me I don't care
 Who are they to determine my thoughts
 Talk that same shhh over and over again
 Shut up and leave me alone
 Stop talking
 Stop yelling
 Talk, talk that same bull
 Think you know what's on my mind
 Well you got the wrong one
 You don't know me so stop that talk, talk

No Love

Love don't come, love don't go
 There's no love stirring in this lonely soul
 Pain comes, pain stays
 Pain is the only thing felt from day to day
 People lie, people cheat
 It's like hate is in everyone you meet
 Tears flow, tears fall
 Down the cheek of this sorrowful girl
 Promises made, promises broken
 Can't trust anything that's spoken
 Emotions high, emotions low
 So confused don't know what to do
 Life starts, life ends
 For some life's over from the start
 Children smile, children cry
 All you can say is you tried
 Dreams played, dreams forgotten
 But nightmares stay 'till you lay in your coffin
 Love don't come, love don't go
 This once loving soul is empty forever more
 And shares love no more

This life we live (young generation) is wild as all hell.
 Some of these young punks need to wake up and look
 at reality, not a image they see on T.V.

I Gotta Get Back

As the ink tears run freely
I begin to miss my loved ones dearly
And as the po-pos slap the cuffs on me
I wish I did things differently
As the steel doors slam with a clang!
I keep my head up
Show no pain
I realize I got nothing to lose
But a grip to gain
I got to gets my education
Ignore all the hateration
And all the CYA games
'Cause I'm too old to play
They'll try to stop me and throw my mind off track
'Cause I gotta get back
To Monterey County
To my family
On the streets
And back to my girl
For they're my world
And I'm dedicated to them
I just got to struggle and strive
And I'll be out in no time
Back home once again
To everyone locked up
To everyone that pretends
Not to give a damn...
Keep yo' head up
To everyone that wears a constant frown...
Like it was said...
"Don't let no one get you down"
And everything will turn out good in the end
Just remember
These walls are man made
And anything man made don't last forever
So puff out your chest
And ride with the solid
And say "Forget the rest!"
To everyone that's still in the court process
Prepare for the worst
And hope for the best...

JOE This next new writer, Joe aka Ghost, was introduced to us by our old and dear friend, Chris Grajeda. And since we trust our friend's judgment, we're giving Joe a spot in The Beat. He writes a letter introducing himself so we don't have to do much of that. We just wanted to give him props on such a good poem. He's writing from the Preston Youth Correctional Facility (a Youth Authority Institution) in Lone, CA. His poem, "I Gotta Get Back," is a plea to the ones who are to come after him. He's saying you don't want to so hopefully he can knock a few potential Youth Authority candidates off their course to the 'Y'. We'll see for only time will tell...

To everyone that pretends
Not to give a damn...
Keep yo' head up
To everyone that wears a constant frown...
Like it was said...
"Don't let no one get you down"

The Beat Within

Let me proceed with this message the proper way by extendin' my utmost love and respect to the Beat Within and their cause.

Hey, my name is Joe but I'm better known as Ghost and I'm from Salinas out in Monterey County. I was told about The Beat by a friend of mine that's been writin to you guys for a while now. His name is Chris G. Grajeda. He told me I should write to you guys and subscribe to your newsletter because I told him I'm interested in poetry.

Anyways I wrote a lil' 'somethin' for your newsletter and would be honored if you used it but if not it's okay. I read a part about opening a workshop out in Monterey County. That sounds like a great idea and I bet the kids at the juvenile hall will get a big kick out of it. Maybe it will even keep some of them from goin' to CYA like me. I don't know how to go about subscribin' to your newsletter so can you send me some info on that? If you have a specific topic for me to write about, shoot that too. Por-favor. Thanks for readin' my letter and keep

KENNETH This next poem is a sweet one. It's a love poem to a girl that was a friend before she became a lover. That's usually the best way to go if you're going to start a relationship. It's one of those love poems that are short and sweet — the kind of poem people copy and send to their own girlfriends. He's writing from Wasco State Prison in Wasco, CA, and we hope we don't see this same poem in our pages with another name on it. Thanks for the love, Kenneth...

Friends To Lovers

Though I really never knew you,
You were just another friend,
But as I began to notice you,
I couldn't help but let my heart unbend,
I couldn't live on a memory,
For memories would only make me cry,
So I forgot about my first love
And wanted to give you a try,
And if you ever leave me
I'm not sure what I'll do,
I guess I'll try to understand
And keep on loving you.

ROBERT HAMILTON All the way from the Eastern Correctional Facility in Westover, Maryland, we give you a writer that got his first copy of The Beat and got blown away. Not to toot our own horns but we've been getting that a lot lately. It might mean we're doing something right. But anyhow, he hits us with a romantic poem about fishing with his girlfriend and the image is heart warming. We know that memory has probably gotten him through some really harsh times. Hopefully, he'll be out soon to fish again...

Our Next Cast

On a rock over this river I look
Holding my fishing rod I bait my hook
My mind's not on fishing just something to do
While I sit up here thinking about me and you
I cast my rod and toy with it for a while
And gaze over these waters that flow for miles
The sky suddenly opens and down pours the rain
So many rain drops, so much pain
These once still waters are silent no more
For this storm has caused a great uproar
Resembling my shame and actions of neglect
These raindrops hit the water leaving a ripple effect
As the storm subsides and the clouds begin to part
I ask my dear God to haul our hearts
And when He does I'll still have one wish
That you'll be here (with me) next time to fish!

I wanna just escape myself,
No sense of self worth or wealth.
Just an empty vessel, another forgotten voice,
But in this life I have no choice.

check out the rest of Friskie's BWO piece on page 4

